Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry

INVENTING AGENCY, INVENTING GENRE

Paula R. Backscheider

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Paula R. Backscheider

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To
my daughter, Andrea, and
my women friends and colleagues
who wouldn't let me walk away from this book

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used either parenthetically in the text or in the notes to refer to frequently cited sources. There may be other sources in the bibliography under the names given below as abbreviations; when those names appear alone, without a short title, I am citing the sources given here.

Bond, *Spectator*	Donald Bond, ed. *The Spectator*. 5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1965.
Bond, *Tatler*	Donald Bond, ed. *The Tatler*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1987.
Curran	Charlotte Smith. *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*. Edited by Stuart Curran. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
DLB	*Dictionary of Literary Biography*. Various editors. 322 vols. to date. Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1978–.
Ezell	Mary Chudleigh. *The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh*. Edited by Margaret J. Ezell. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
Fullard	Joyce Fullard, ed. *British Women Poets, 1660–1800: An Anthology*. Troy, NY: Whitston, 1990.
H&G	Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Essays and Poems and Simplicity, A Comedy*. Edited by Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993.
Hinnant	Charles Hinnant. *The Poetry of Anne Finch: An Essay in Interpretation*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994.
Lonsdale	Roger Lonsdale, ed. *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
M&K	Anna Laetitia Barbauld. *The Poems of Anna Laetitia Barbauld*. Edited by William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994.
Marshall	Madeleine Forell Marshall. *The Poetry of Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674–1737)*. Lewiston, ON: Edwin Mellen, 1987.

Pascoe	Mary Robinson. *Mary Robinson: Selected Poems.* Edited by Judith Pascoe. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2000.
Philips	Katherine Philips. *Poems (1667) by Katherine Philips.* Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1992.
Reynolds	Anne Finch. *The Poems of Anne, Countess of Winchilsea.* Edited by Myra Reynolds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903. Reprint, New York: AMS, 1974.
Scott	Anna Seward. *The Poetical Works of Anna Seward.* Edited by Sir Walter Scott. 3 vols. Edinburgh, 1810. Facsimile ed. New York: AMS, 1974.
Todd	Janet Todd, ed. *A Dictionary of British and American Women Writers, 1660–1800.* Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1985.
Tucker	Laetitia Pilkington and Constantia Grierson. *The Poetry of Laetitia Pilkington (1712–1750) and Constantia Grierson (1706–1733).* Edited by Bernard Tucker. Lewiston, ON: Edwin Mellen, 1996.
Wellesley	Anne Finch. *The Anne Finch Wellesley Manuscript Poems.* Edited by Barbara McGovern and Charles Hinnant. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998.

Plan of the Book

> The perpetual task of criticism, every generation or two, is to understand again the literature of the past. Literature which cannot survive this renewal of understanding, and live again in the critical sensibility of posterity, must contain some radical flaw of interest; it is perhaps in this sense that time is the test of poetry. — ALLEN TATE

> It is literary evolution that should be studied, because literature is a social form. In this connection, the issue that takes on enormous importance for us is the formation and successive changes of genres.
> — BORIS ÉJXENBAUM, "Theory of the Formal Method"

Rather than a systematic introduction to eighteenth-century women's poetry, a history of their poetry, or a unified, progressive argument, this book is an exploration of the forms in which women poets wrote. It recognizes some of their contributions to evolutions in poetic form and to changes in the work poetry does in the culture, and it highlights the beginnings of some distinctive strains that constitute traditions of women's poetry. It pauses to use as case studies some special kinds of poetry, such as women's circuit-of-Apollo poems and imitations of Tibullus's elegies. These groups were selected partly because they have been relatively neglected and partly to illustrate the range of literary critical opportunities this poetry offers. I spend much less time on the poets about whom there is substantial criticism than on those about whom little has been written, although I have tried to guide the reader to the excellent work that Carole Barash, Stuart Curran, Kathryn King, Donna Landry, William McCarthy, Ann Messenger, Judith Pascoe, and others have done on a few poets.

My method requires quoting an unusually large number of poems either in their entirety or in substantial excerpts. Of course these quotations fulfill their usual functions, such as illustrating points, but they also allow the reader to sample some women's poetry that is difficult to access. Many poems crucial to my arguments are available only on microfilm, in collections of rare books in a few places in the English-speaking world, or in modern books that are not readily available.[1] Thus, one of my book's most useful features is its bringing out of obscurity little-known poetry that needs to be factored into literary and gender

history. Over and over I discovered how less economically poetry can be summarized than unfamiliar or even unknown plays and novels. Because poetry is so compressed, and the language so allusive and metaphoric, no summary can capture what is being said without being, ironically, longer than the poem. Moreover, a poem can never be considered apart from its verbal and metrical music, and I have tried to allow poems to stand forth to be experienced and judged as poetry.

This book is intended for those desiring an entrée into eighteenth-century women's poetry, for the adventurous, for the general reader who enjoys learning about literary history and women's history, as well as for students and specialists of eighteenth-century literature, poetry, and women's studies. My book assumes readers at least somewhat familiar with eighteenth-century poetry and the Great Tradition and appeals for a charitable awareness of the considerable challenges that the subject presents. My hope is that this book will fill several gaps and be a resource for scholars and critics who need a better-charted landscape, with sharper details, than is currently available. It joins the project of reconstructing the professional and personal culture in which poetry was written and disseminated. Harriet K. Linkin and Stephen C. Behrendt remind us that since 1985 the inclusion of women has brought about "a wholesale rethinking of British Romanticism, both as an intellectual and cultural phenomenon and as a site of literary production."[2] Such a structural reorganization and reconception has occurred in eighteenth-century novel studies and is under way in drama studies, but it certainly is not under way in poetry studies. We do not need the cautions against rushing to canonize that are appearing in Romanticism criticism. For example, Isobel Armstrong writes, "Mercifully, a canon has not yet been founded, for canons seal poets into hierarchies; but we have not found productive historical ways of thinking about female poets either."[3] We are far from an equivalent of Julie Ellison's encapsulating observation: "Happily, it is difficult to introduce poems by Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Charlotte Smith, Joanna Baillie, Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Tighe, Hannah More, and Felicia Hemans into courses on Romantic poetry without challenging the notion of Romanticism itself."[4]

This book also assumes that readers are willing to reconsider the familiar hierarchy of genres and modes. Women's poetry, especially early women's poetry, has often been trivialized. Allegedly about trivial subjects and having a tendency to lower rather than raise emotion, it has earned its neglect, its critics would say. For example, the death of a child is expected to be treated with sentimentality and pathos rather than with tragic or majestic dignity. Critics have searched out

poems that "prove" this belief, and anthologizers have printed so few poems by women and printed the same ones so frequently that it is easy to believe that there are not many excellent poems by women. Gender takes the blame for what is really the unisex treatment of fashionable or perennial subjects in predictable, uninspired, mediocre metrics, structure, imagery, and language. Things have changed far too little since Gisela Ecker's groundbreaking *Feminist Aesthetics* (1985), in which she rightly recognized that being a woman writer determined the status of the text and that the category was permeated with, inseparable from, stereotypes about women. More than twenty years ago feminists pointed out that the major strategy used to disqualify women's literature and history from study was to trivialize it,[5] and these responses persist.

Of all the genres, poetry, that sublime form of imaginative human and literary utterance, has the most closed canon. In other words, we know before we even begin to read whether a text is part of the canon or not.[6] David Perkins reminds us that literary classifications have been determined and maintained in a very few ways: by "tradition, ideological interests, the aesthetic requirements of writing a literary history, the assertions of authors and their contemporaries about their affinities and antipathies, the similarities that the literary historian observes among authors and/or texts, and the needs of professional careers and the politics of power in institutions."[7] Almost all of these almost always work against women, easily becoming what Eve Sedgwick styled as a canon "constituted and motivated by 'a priceless history' of male-male pedagogic or pederastic relations."[8]

Canon formation and maintenance is a dynamic, constantly defended and contested process. For more than a decade, in the wake of Roger Lonsdale's and Joyce Fullard's anthologies of poetry by women, we have acknowledged that we need to build on their monumental contributions and gain experience with the works of a wide range of poets. In the past decade too we have accepted the contingent nature of aesthetic judgments and the canon.[9] Contingency authorizes and legitimates discarding some standards, substituting others, and therefore brings all into question. We know now to take into consideration a time's aesthetic values, its politics, its ruling class, its opinions about the work that literature should do in society, and changes in sensibility and structures of feeling. We can identify authoritative groups of canonizers, track their long arc of influence, and watch for incidents of successful critical promotion. We can see how such things as demands for dense classical allusion exclude all but certain classes of educated people with similar values and goals. Suvir Kaul has pointed out that "even if the poetic idiom created by Duck and Collier, or by Gray or

Thomson or Cowper or George Crabbe, represents a shift toward vernacular rhythms and speech, the poetry produced by these writers is marked by Milton's Latinate sublimities, or the romantic archaisms of Spenser, or simply by the formal and metrical codes by which poets conducted their business."[10] These are certainly codes, and those who would be poets had to gain access to them.

My readers will also find far more in these poems than "truth burst[ing] forth in defiance of expected patriarchal conventions."[11] To seek and privilege anti-patriarchal themes falsifies women's — and human — literary history, and while I give the theme of defiance its due, I believe that emphasis on it has been almost as much a detriment to assessment as trivialization. There are, of course, innumerable ways a text can "burst forth in defiance" of patriarchal conventions, and the poetry I discuss is filled with "not that way, *this* way" poems. Yet defiance and resistance to patriarchy are not primary motivations for many of these women. There are not many attacks as direct as Aphra Behn's epilogue to *Sir Patient Fancy*, and our critical methodologies are perhaps better suited to working with them. Palimpsests, "works whose designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning," and the playful "parodic proliferation," accumulating dramatizations of performances of gender that reveal the "radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assigned to be natural and necessary," found at least now and then in all of these women's poetry, are far more subtle, nuanced, and varied than familiar examples of defiance.[12] After all, gender is constructed within the social relations of a specific community and time, and women's material circumstances, experiences, social position and obligations, and understandings vary considerably within the same nation and time period. As Kathryn King says of Jane Barker, "If the *Poetical Recreations* verse is any indication, poetry by women in this period exhibits a greater range of tones, moods, manners, and voices than existing feminist paradigms, with their heavy stress upon gender difference and patriarchal silencing, prepare us to recognize."[13] Roger Lonsdale's research led him to conclude that "the world of eighteenth-century poetry is at once less predictable and more familiar than we have been led to believe,"[14] and if we do not think in gendered categories, that statement is almost as true of poetry by women as it is of poetry by men.

The truth is that women poets of this period are in dialogue with other women (friends and poets), with their contemporaneous male writers, and, like all writers, with the poetry they have inherited and are reading — especially the best-known and most respected. With King, I recognize the need for "protocols of

reading responsive to dialogical and sociable as well as subversive and contestatory elements," and, indeed, I have discovered the former to be more useful. The appreciation women have for poetry and their longing to be poets gleam throughout eighteenth-century women's writing. A place to express themselves in a time when outspokenness and even close female friendships were regarded with suspicion and often forbidden,[15] their poetry records their ambivalences, their aspirations, their experiences, and their participation in the artistic, political, and civic life of their time.

I have come to believe that the need to reintroduce women into the literary history of poetry is greater than the need in the history of fiction and, certainly, drama. I could argue this contention in various ways, but here I will simply give two reasons. First, poetry was "far and away the most frequently published type of literature,"[16] and there were many, many women writing a lot of poetry. Statistical studies of women writers by Judith Stanton reveal that poetry was women's most popular literary form, and she calculates that 263 women published poetry between 1660 and 1800 (in comparison, she tallies 201 women who published novels). Until 1760, however, the average number of women publishing poetry in a decade was 7; the figures Stanton gives for the next decades are 19 in the 1760s, 36 in the 1770s, 55 in the 1780s, and 64 in the 1790s.[17] Roger Lonsdale asserts that in the first decade of the eighteenth century only two women published collections of their poetry, while in the 1790s more than thirty did (Lonsdale, xxi). James Robert de J. Jackson has identified more than eight hundred women poets in England and America who published 1,402 first editions between 1770 and 1835.[18] We do not even know basic biographical information about most of them or how they attained access to publication. With a very few exceptions, all of the painstaking work that has been done on Behn needs to be performed on them. At this time we lack even the "countercanon," that stage that most genres in literary periods go through before the canon changes. In other words, there was a fairly well-accepted list of eighteenth-century women novelists that were studied and written about before it became standard to teach a text by Behn, Haywood, and another woman in courses on the novel. And there are now several anthologies of plays by long-eighteenth-century women dramatists. We do not even know how women's poetry helped women living within Simone de Beauvoir's counteruniverse "order, interpret, mythologize, or dispose of their own experience."[19]

Second, some representative facts about the state of the field point to the need for a new explanatory model for eighteenth-century poetry. A few women have

been recognized as excellent poets, as Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, and Charlotte Smith are. The truth is that we have not integrated either into the literary history of the eighteenth century. I would agree with Brent Raycroft that their cases measure "a collective failure of criticism."[20] We are just beginning to understand Smith's own poetry and contribution to what is called the sonnet revival, and we have not yet begun to look at other forms "revived," developed, or significantly altered by women that are equally or even more important.

To begin to integrate women's poetry, we need to work through each poetic kind, and I recognize four lines of inquiry. One follows "masculine" forms that women influenced profoundly, most notably the retirement poem, the classical elegy, and the metrical tale. The second considers genres that women shaped and developed and then lost to the male tradition (without Stuart Curran's efforts, the sonnet would be an example). Third, genres associated with female writing in earlier centuries that women made their own but that are now believed to be static, even dead; they await serious attention using today's powerful theoretical tools. The friendship poem, that form that Katherine Philips left as her legacy for women, is a premier example. It reveals itself as remaining vital, flexible, and ever present—and continuing into our day. The prizewinning poet Marilyn Hacker, for instance, wrote in 1997 that she wished someone would pay her the compliment, "I love the way you write about women's friendships."[21] Another is the "domestic" poem, which at this point is usually studied as "Swift's influence" and undifferentiated by subject, technique, decade, or individual writer. It actually needs to be studied in connection with poems of common life and situated within the line of poems stretching from John Gay's *Shepherd's Week* through John Dyer's *The Fleece* to William Cowper's *The Task*. The fourth line of inquiry tracks genres now usually excluded from literary study that women shared in shaping and making useful in the culture perhaps equally with men. Eighteenth-century religious poetry is the most obvious example, and its treatment contrasts strikingly with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious verse. Not only do women's poems underscore its importance and excellence in the century but they illuminate the work to which poets adapted its varied kinds. For instance, Elizabeth Hands used a narrative paraphrase for a scathing exposé of master-servant power relationships and of how male bonding can push lust into the most repulsive kinds of rape.

Throughout the eighteenth century women, like men, were developing their own uses and kinds of poetry, were leading poetic movements—and following poetic movements and fads. They earned the right to be treated seriously as

individuals and as artists within a generation or a strain of poetry. To redeploy Jerome McGann's words, the telling of Herstory often "calls out" History, and so it will in this case.[22] Certainly the critical landscape of the eighteenth-century novel has changed. Instead of seeing the Dream Team of novelists run on a strobe-lighted court, we see shifting configurations of writers and understand how they relate to one another horizontally and vertically. As a result, we see them in a variety of contexts, especially perhaps political, social, and historical. In the process, we have created better explanatory models, models not only more true to historical facts but also more satisfying for our own understanding of a genre that is very important to us and of its dynamic contributions to shaping the modern mind. To some extent, I expect to show how the study of women poets will yield the same kinds of major revisions in literary history.

Approaching the Poetry

My first mission became to carve out methodologies to work with the hundreds—literally hundreds—of women poets, few of whose works are in print or have ever been reprinted since the eighteenth century. Although it meant the sacrifice of important figures such as Margaret Cavendish, Katherine Philips, Behn, and Barker, I chose to concentrate on eighteenth-century poets alone. After reading the complete poetic works of almost one hundred women poets, I selected approximately forty who seem to have been influential in determining the directions poetry took over a long stretch of time less studied than that of the Restoration figures, and they embody the contexts that most interest me—literary, social, and political. With two exceptions, I chose not to write about poets, groups of poets, or subjects of poetry that had already received sophisticated, recent critical attention. Thus, for instance, working-class poets, the influence of Pope's poetry on women writers, and abolition poetry are taken into account but largely excluded.[23] This book does feature some predictable characters—Anne Finch and Charlotte Smith—and some that ought to be predictable, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Even for these figures the range, experimentation, and excellence of their work are not sufficiently known. More commonly, however, I chose far more neglected poets and cast even somewhat familiar ones in unfamiliar roles and more prominent positions in literary history. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, for instance, if recognized at all today, is known for her piety or her rather macabre dedication to her dead husband. Finch, Mary Barber, Jane Brereton, Elizabeth Carter, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld, all excellent poets

who span the century, wrote tributes to Rowe.[24] In 1739 Brereton summarized the common opinion to Carter, writing that Rowe "had a fine Genius; and no Attachments in this World, to prevent her indulging, and improving it. Her Stile is flowing, and perfectly Poetical; her Descriptions are exceeding lively."[25] The criteria they emphasized in Rowe are familiar to us: metrical beauty, structure, precision, emotional force, dramatic immediacy, and the amount and vividness of description. I attempt to restore her to her former position in literary history.

Another example of a poet whom I treat in some revisionary ways is Elizabeth Carter, not an especially prolific poet but an important transition figure between Rowe and Smith and the kinds of poetry and poetic lives they represent. Carter, also a transitional figure in the intellectual line represented by Mary Chudleigh, Constantia Grierson, and Hester Chapone, created a space for herself that was both modest and assertive, a "proper station" and a personal working life that gave her considerable freedom. She welcomed publishing as a profession appropriate to women and championed that attitude with her Bluestocking correspondents.[26] She was praised for the quality of her poetry and for the ideal that Smith, Anna Seward, and their generation cultivated: "an elevated genius, a good heart, and an exalted mind." An anonymous tribute links Rowe and Carter in these terms: "Such were the notes our chaster Sappho sung, / And every Muse dropped honey on her tongue" and "Such were the notes that struck the wond'ring ear / Of silent Night, when, on the verdant banks / Of Siloe's hallow'd brook, celestial harps, / According to seraphic voices, sung."[27] Roger Lonsdale calls Carter "the first widely cited inspirational example for women writers with serious literary ambitions in the second half of the century" (Lonsdale, xxxi). Although Finch and Rowe led serious lives of the mind and were dedicated, aspiring poets, Carter and the decade of her *Poems on Several Occasions* (1762) inaugurate the period when women could claim poetry as a vocation and were praised for their contributions to their nation's literary and cultural aspirations.

Working within these restrictions on the numbers of poets, I planned to analyze most of the major forms of eighteenth-century poetry, which I conceive, as Rosalie Colie did, to be families or literary kinds rather than traditional, largely classical genres. Topic, content, and mode are more often the unifying factors, as they are with the friendship and religious poems, than is structure, which governs the sonnet and to some extent the kinds of elegies I discuss.[28] By *major* I meant both respected, canonical kinds and the most popular forms—what poets within a decade were writing and publishers like Edward Cave and Robert Dodsley were selling. This was so ambitious as to be hallucinatory, and yet each of my chapters

still deserves to be a book in itself. As my study developed, inevitably I was forced to delimit the range. For example, in the final revision I omitted eighteenth-century women's metrical tales, although they are probably as important to the Romantic period as Smith's sonnets have proved to be, and their intersections with the development of the novel, with growing class consciousness and tensions, and with recitation as a leisure activity haunt me. The space required to analyze the large categories of religious poetry and the friendship poem meant that less attention could be given to the ode, that consistently favorite form, or satire, that vexed form that becomes more vexed when women write it. Fortunately, however, both of these kinds have received serious attention from other critics. In all cases, I followed my principle of selecting the more neglected forms and concentrating on what has been previously overlooked, on women's participation in poetic movements, and on distinctly gendered practices and uses I identified as central.

Although my book is organized around the forms in which women wrote, it is not intended to be a new history or to argue a progression toward, for instance, female poetic excellence or distinctly female forms of poetry. Nor have I forgotten that as conscious of genre as poets were, blending, mixing, and juxtaposing poetic kinds describe their actual composition. I trace changing fashions in poetry, and I try, chapter by chapter, to move through my list of noteworthy poets and to keep in mind generations of poets. Sometimes the achievement of an "earlier" woman dictated her inclusion in "later" chapters. At other times the woman's publication history challenged a tidy chronology—Mary Whateley Darwall, for example, published her first book of poetry in 1764 and her second in 1794, while Anna Laetitia Barbauld published nearly continuously for fifty years. Because the number of women poets increases so dramatically in each quarter of the century, the coverage of the later decades is necessarily more selective. In short, I am admitting the vastness of my subject and that some idiosyncrasies surely resulted.

This book is not based on the paradigms of the old literary history. Rather it tests, interrogates, and occasionally uses them. Even had I wanted to, I could not force women into existing paradigms and systems from which they were excluded and whose values they continually questioned and still question. It was not enough to create a "landscape" that somehow mapped women onto it, as if they were tourist sites.[29] Who the poets were, what they wrote, how they interacted with one another and with the people and communities around them, and how poetry's place in the culture encourages new paradigms and the beginning of a

new, multidimensional literary history are my lines of inquiry. Barbara Lewalski points out that early women's texts have been much too narrowly contextualized, and she blames the "balkanized," heavily gendered scholarship of the present day. She writes that they are "studied chiefly in relation to other women's texts, or to modern feminist theory, or to some aspect of the period's patriarchal ideology. Yet these texts urgently need to be read with the full scholarly apparatus of textual analysis, historical synthesis, and literary interpretation in play. . . . [and] brought to bear upon questions that have become central for literary scholars."[30] This kind of gender balkanization works both ways. Thus, I do not see or use men's poetry as models or measures, and I begin with a chapter that argues that women were writing everything men were. Although I do not stop to contest the ubiquitous commonplaces about eighteenth-century women's emulation of male poets and their lack of ambition, I would say about the women across the century what Betty Rizzo, Donna Landry, and Jennifer Keith have said of Mary Leapor: that rather than being imitators of male poets (Pope in Leapor's case), they seem more often than not to contest them with both content and form. For instance, placing Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* beside Leapor's *Crumble Hall* reveals her own formal mastery as well as her different perspective and ideological critique. Even more significant, however, are the women who were not contesting a brother poet but developing independent strains within a form, as so many women writers of retirement poetry did.

The Chapters

This book is designed to lay a foundation for future study of eighteenth-century women poets, their poetry, and the literary histories to which they belong. Within each chapter's exploration of a poetic kind a few women poets are featured. They were chosen for the representativeness, skill, and originality with which they practiced the form — what I judge to be their artistic excellence — and, in most cases, because they illustrate the kind of impact on a form that a woman or women made on the evolution of poetry in English. Also within each chapter is at least one sustained critical study of an especially interesting subgroup of poems, such as the formal verse *apologeia* in chapter 3, the thankful hymn on the recovery from illness in chapter 4, and the sonnet cycle in chapter 8. These analyses illustrate the diversity and originality of women's work and also the critical opportunities their poetry offers. In a book dedicated to probing issues of agency, poems of self-assertion figure large, as does attention to how a woman

might construct and live out a poetic career. This inquiry is foregrounded by the bookend chapters 2 and 8, the former organized around the poetry of Anne Finch and the latter centered on Charlotte Smith. In addition to their real and accepted superiority to most poets, these women illustrate admirably the range of poetry women wrote, how women constructed poetic careers and agency, and the changes from the beginning to the end of the century in poetic tastes and the acceptance of women poets.

Chapter 1, the introduction, contextualizes my study, first, through a description of ways poetry was read and appreciated in the eighteenth century and, second, in relation to some of today's most absorbing issues. The next two chapters continue the discussion of the place of poetry in the culture and open the examination of what women were writing. Chapter 2 is organized around the popular poetic kinds, many traditionally associated with men. I include what we would call today "popular culture" types, such as occasional and theater verse, as well as the older forms that poets and the public of the time especially enjoyed, such as the pastoral dialogue and fables. Chapter 3 continues the survey of the kinds of poetry women wrote, with emphasis on the ways they were joining public debates with significance to them. The first of these chapters is anchored by the poetry of Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, and the second by the poetry of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Elizabeth Singer Rowe. They and their verse are quite different and yet representative of their time, and in the eighteenth century all three were equally well known as personalities and poets.

Chapter 4 considers religious poetry. Although we have a great deal of sophisticated, literary criticism about such poetry from earlier centuries, the eighteenth century's compositions are relatively neglected and often compartmentalized. After exploring paraphrases of scripture, the most commonly written form, and the hymn, perhaps the most familiar, I explore the two forms that women transformed or created: the narrative tale based on incidents in the Bible and "devout soliloquies," a form invented by Elizabeth Singer Rowe. The narrative tales were dramatic renderings of biblical stories and may be the place where women made their most daring and outspoken statements about such things as the patriarchy, male bonding, and class relationships. The devout soliloquies weave personal experiences and interpretations into the set pieces of meditation (the goodness of God, hope of pardon, surrender to God). Rowe circulated hers among friends, contributing to a nearly unstudied part of manuscript culture. These early chapters are especially important in revealing highly original examples of coding. As in all subordinated cultures, women poets "express ideas, beliefs, experiences,

feelings and attitudes that the dominant culture—and perhaps even the dominated group—would find disturbing or threatening if expressed in more overt forms."[31] These codes also draw the subordinated group together, forging them into a community recognized as such by its members. Although this result is expected with the friendship poem, religious poetry, surprisingly, rivals it in these respects.

Chapter 5 argues that the friendship poem, the form usually associated with Katherine Philips and assumed to be a mere antiquarian curiosity, came into its own in the eighteenth century and became a flexible, startlingly original and revisionary family of poems. Michel Foucault once wrote, "I think now, after studying the history of sex, we should try to understand the history of friendship, or friendships. That history is very, very important."[32] Like the study of religious poetry, however, attention to literary expressions of friendship declines as we enter the eighteenth century. An important and understudied form of life-writing, the friendship poem gives us access to women's private or counter-universe and to new evidence about the ways literature can nurture independence, identity formation, and imaginative self-realization. By encouraging both a private, interiorized identity and a repertory of social selves that includes the political citizen, the friendship poem became a site from which to resist society's increasing gendering pressures.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 concentrate on three major forms of eighteenth-century poetry: retirement poems, elegies, and sonnets. All were popular types in the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, and many beautiful examples survive. Like the friendship poem, the retirement poem is often viewed as having faded, at the latest, early in the eighteenth century or having morphed into the melancholy "graveyard" poem. In women's hands, however, the poem drew upon and departed from both the earlier and contemporary manifestations. This subject had much to offer women because retirement poems often represented a person without political or public power, even an exile from decision making, and they portrayed (or insisted upon with bravado) a hard-won, deeply virtuous, self-sufficient contentment. Women's poems, however, are quite different; for example, the speaker is neither alone nor melancholy, and constructing a way of life is a different undertaking. These women poets intensified, broke with, and revised almost every defining characteristic, thereby raising the question of who identifies conventions and sets perimeters for inclusion in a literary genre. Yet by writing formal retirement poems they were buying into an aesthetic and an ideological model, one that was self-fashioning.[33] The eighteenth was actually a

transitional century for the retirement poem, and women embraced the theme and subject, adapted it from what men were doing, and then passed it along greatly enriched.

Before the great male Romantic poets composed in them, women poets experimented with new forms and uses for the ode, the classical elegy, the sonnet, and the metrical tale, and women played a major part in the revival and revitalization of the last three. Chapter 7 explores various kinds of elegies, and chapter 8 the sonnet. These forms are now associated with the Romantic period, but women were working with them as early as the 1740s and deserve to have reintroduced into literary history their part in shaping them. Classical elegy seems to have come late to neoclassical study and adaptation, and women were leaders in this movement. Privileging some of its earliest themes and subjects, they found it an ideal form for considerations of the inseparability of the private and public. As with other poetic kinds, they both appreciated traditional stylistic and thematic conventions and broke with masculine preferences. In embracing Tibullus, whose elegies consistently juxtapose war and domestic bliss and whose circle included a woman poet, for instance, they turned away from Ovid's miserable, deserted women in the *Heroides.* Women poets went far beyond the traditional forms to create revisionary poetry that they hoped would influence public opinion. Elegies are always about love as well as death, and the chapter concludes with a study of a set of poems on same-sex desire.

Chapter 8, the final chapter in this group begins with the sonnet, with special attention to Charlotte Smith, the poet now given credit for the "sonnet revival." Placing her in a sketchy survey of sonnet writing by women and attempting to identify her particular contributions and influences, I read her as an eighteenth-century rather than a nineteenth-century, or "pre-Romantic," poet. The rest of the chapter argues that the identification of a woman poet with a single form, regardless of how important and even predominating, falsifies, and therefore makes emphatic, that there is simply no substitute for comprehending a poet's entire *oeuvre.* To locate Smith's sonnets within her entire career produces a number of rather different readings while considerably developing the picture of her achievement and of the century's poetic landscape. For example, through Smith and the other poets in this chapter, we see the triumph of the belief in the inseparability of sensibility and political consciousness[34] and Smith's creative transfer of poetry into her novels and of narrative strategies into her poetry.

These chapters continue to test the hypothesis that women were important contributors to the project shared by most of the century's poets, namely, to

create distinctively English poetic forms, many obviously related to the classical forms with the most cultural capital but, they hoped, superior in their aesthetic qualities[35] and in their suitability for their modern world. As early as 1712, in Bernard Lintott's important *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations*, John Gay wrote of translations, "And *Homer's* Godlike Muse be made our own." Poets throughout the century continued to assert the importance of the project; Pope, for instance, in the "Advertisement" to Book 2, Epistle 1, "To Augustus," wrote that he had made Horace's Epistle to Augustus "entirely English." Because they were not expected to know the classical verse forms, women could adapt them freely, and they were not as self-conscious in trying to create, for instance, an English pastoral or elegiac form and tradition that served their needs—as they did.

I conclude with an essay on two of the major issues regarding these women's writing: how disabling their handicaps were and what the barriers are to giving these poets the same kinds of serious attention that women novelists and dramatists of the eighteenth century have received. The pressing questions do not seem to me to be those raised by the feminist critics, including myself, working with other genres, that is, what the historical, social, personal,[36] and ethical implications of excluding women from serious study and the canon are. Although I believe that there are serious consequences to neglecting these questions, I believe that the greater need is to understand the literary and aesthetic aspects. Ironically, because so little work has been done on the women poets, my book offers a markedly different, almost inverse, approach to reconstructing a literary landscape from that carried out by the critics and scholars who have remapped novel history. Specifically, rather than working from isolated examinations of individual writers, one by one, only to see them rise and fall and never become either sufficiently integrated into literary history or fixed in the canon (as Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote* seems to have done), I consider entire poetic kinds as practiced throughout the century. This approach may yield a better sense of the cost to literary history of omitting women writers and offer a more reliable way to answer the question that bedevils feminist critics: Who is worthy of remembrance?

This prologue began with two quotations. Allen Tate lays down the challenge to critics that I have accepted. His is also a challenge to these long-dead women writers. I offer the renewal of understanding, but whether the poetry can live again in our critical sensibilities will be resolved by readers. The great Russian formalist Boris Éjxenbaum reminds us to study literature as a social form and as an evolutionary process from which new and adapted genres come. In spite of my

reluctance to write a new literary history, the poetry women composed, the traditions they transmit and alter, the genres they transform, the changing society in which different generations lived, and the space and identity they claimed by the end of the century assert a history and a powerful story of evolution. Startling expressions of humor, anger, sarcasm, elation, grief, contentment, ambition, sympathy, and playfulness abound in the poetry explored in my book, and the evolution of women's poetry, with its inevitable impact on literary history, begins to make itself apparent.

Many of the women poets in my book will be unfamiliar, in some cases perhaps unknown, even to specialists in the fields of women's studies and eighteenth-century poetry. In order to reduce confusion, I consistently use the name of the poet at the time of her death and spell names as they are given in Janet Todd's *Dictionary of British and American Women Writers, 1660–1800*. I recognize uncertainties about, for instance, whether Mary is best styled *Monk* or *Monck* (Lonsdale, 70) and awkwardnesses in the cases of some poets, like Sarah Fyge Egerton and Mary Whateley Darwall, who published significant work under both their maiden and married names. Brief biographies precede the Notes.

I have used Poet and Poetry as cultural-studies critics do Culture to signal a distinction between, on the one hand, ordinary, "real" poets and their poetry and, on the other, high art and the traditional, indeed ancient, aspirations, social functions, and calling that are associated with writing in this genre. I use *poetry by women* and *women's poetry* interchangeably; in this book I am not considering poetry written specifically for women as a category of production. Finally, the guidelines in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition, have been followed in quotations, and as recommended, all titles of poems are italicized.

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Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

I'd sooner lead a dancing bear,
Than bow my neck to Fashion's yoke.
— ELIZA TUITE

The eighteenth century was a time of tumult and revolutionary change in the public and private spheres. Scarred at the beginning by the Interregnum, regicide, and the Glorious Revolution, it concluded with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. The British learned to justify empire building, a parliamentary monarchy, and the transportation of its citizens to America and Australia. The War of the Spanish Succession made Britain the major slaving nation, the battle of Plassey and the Seven Years' War confirmed its imperialist identity, and the American War of Independence humbled it; all tested the nation's sense of itself, especially as the premier example of "liberty." In the first half of the century the British Empire was "essentially an Atlantic one," but by 1815 "the whole of eastern India, most of the peninsula and a large part of the Ganges valley," the coast of Ceylon, and the island of Mauritius belonged to Great Britain.[1] The Jacobite rebellions, the Sacheverell, Wilkite, and Gordon riots, and the proliferation of political societies and associations are but signs of ideological battles and the costs of change. Crime, homelessness, and poverty rose, and controversies over who should be educated to what extent and in what manner flared through the century. "The middle classes and even the poor became increasingly

politicized," historians agree,[2] and sustained debates about the nature and rights of people of various classes and ethnicities inflected discourses about the sexes.

In spite of these forces, much was stable, including the centrality of the monarchy and the Protestant religion, control of Parliament and the courts by the landed elite, and faith in the constitution. Although manufacturing, commerce, and international trade accelerated, Britain was still largely a rural, agrarian society. Patriarchy remained the ideology of the state and the family, and even such shifts as from dower to strict settlement and jointure tended to strengthen it.[3] The British continued to see themselves as a benevolent people, and as the parish charity system proved inadequate, foundling and lying-in hospitals were established. Another constant was war: only brief periods were free of it. The war years were 1702–13, 1715 (the Jacobite Rebellion), 1718–29, 1739–48, 1756–63, 1775–83, and 1793–1815.

Just as these events and issues were the subjects of poems by men, so they were for women, and even when they are not central, traces of them tint men's and women's writings and their texts' public reception. In a nation aspiring to superiority in arts and arms and for whom the metaphor of the ideal state was grounded in an image of marriage and the relationship between man and woman, poetry, its content, and its composers were of national significance.

Changing Contexts

Although it hardly needs to be said, the material circumstances in which poetry was composed and read in the eighteenth century were so different as to be alien to us today. Even pronunciation has changed, and lines that seem gratingly inept would have rhymed and scanned in their day. For instance, *er* was often pronounced *ar*; and *supreme* rhymed with *fame;* words borrowed from French retained more of the French pronunciation. "Taste," which often seems bewildering or astonishing, helped dictate both the "purposes" of poetry and its aesthetic "standards." Critics deplore the rage for Pindarics and later for Shenstone that seduced poets and "ruined" their promise, but at the height of each imitative craze people believed important and beautiful elements were being added to British verse. We may never fully understand why Frances Greville's *Prayer for Indifference* (1759), an excellent poem that Lonsdale identifies as "the most celebrated poem by a woman in the period," was so overwhelmingly popular,[4] but we can come to understand the way a genre functions in a culture in numerous, important, revisionary ways.

Above all, poetry in the eighteenth century was written for more reasons than we can imagine. Much of it was written without high literary ambitions, and its purposes would render the use of the codes of prestige poetry ridiculous. In the first half of the century both men and women came to be expected to be able to create graceful extempore poems at social events and for every occasion—even a dinner invitation. More and more poetry was written to be social communication or entertainment, as songs and anagrams were, or as a display of wit, social grace, or accomplishment. At the same time, poetry never ceased to be editorial and propaganda. It even performed some of the same work as had periodicals, beginning with the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. For example, poetry taught the middle classes how to dress, how to participate in fashionable activities, and how to age gracefully, as did Ann Murry's *The Card Party*, *A Town Eclogue*, Clara Reeve's *To a Coquet, Disappointed of a Party of Pleasure*, and Anne Finch's *Clarinda's Indifference at Parting with Her Beauty*.

By the middle of the century poets worked in an almost entirely different world. Periodicals and then anthologies became major popularizers of poetry and poets. Publication became increasingly easy, and these periodicals carefully framed poetry by women in a discourse of gratitude and respect for their talents and gender. Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine* printed eight pages with two columns of poetry in selected issues in 1733 and in all issues beginning in 1735. His poetry contests were popular with women, and Jane Brereton, for instance, found a reliable venue for her poetry with Cave. Miscellanies, anthologies, and collections of poems became the most profitable ways to sell poetry, and these kinds of books, especially Robert Dodsley's, rode the cultural obsession with developing and displaying taste.[5] By 1745 there were thirty periodical journals, and although some were short-lived, more appeared regularly.[6]

In this new print-rich world, publishers created a need for the review of almost every book published. As Antonia Forster says, "The most remarkable aspect of the establishment of the early general review journals is the rapidity with which readers appear to have been brought to accept the argument that such a publication is something 'which no one, conversant in the Literary World, ought, in justice to themselves, to be without.' "[7] These journals gave generous space to poetry and made clear the benefits of reading poetry by women. Reviews of Barbauld's 1773 *Poems* were, for instance, overwhelmingly favorable, and Richard Terry offers solid evidence that "women's writing seems to be given especially rapid advancement in the third quarter of the eighteenth century."[8] Booksellers beginning with the Interregnum generation of Humphrey Moseley had devel-

oped consumer demand and begun identifying specific markets for kinds of books. As early as 1685, people noted a "fashion" for poetry by women, and a century later that demand would be met in a variety of ways.[9]

After 1780, publishers made sure that readers knew, for instance, that their paper, magazine, or collection included the latest or most discussed poem by Smith or Seward, and Robinson's work fed on periodical opportunities. People felt that they needed to read poems fresh from the press, as well as the "classics," which had come to include the "national" poets, Spenser, Milton, and Pope.[10] Anthologies for women routinely offered both, as Oliver Goldsmith's *Poems for Young Ladies in Three Parts: Devotional, Moral, and Entertaining* (1767) included poems by Addison, Parnell, Waller, Collins, and Dryden, along with "The parting of Hector and Andromache" from the *Iliad*, the death of Dido from the *Aeneid*, and the "Story of Narcissus" from Ovid.

Provincial subscription publishing, another revolution in the book trade, made access to print even easier. The citizens of Plymouth supported both of Ann Thomas's publications (a novel and *Poems on Various Subjects*, 1784), and the local gentry and circles of friends and supporters from Coventry and the Rugby School were the subscribers to Elizabeth Hands's *The Death of Amnon . . . With An Appendix: Containing Pastorals, and other Poetical Pieces* (1789). Ann Messenger describes young men "bustling around the [Oxford] colleges, persuading their friends" to subscribe to Mary Whateley [Darwall]'s *Original Poems on Several Occasions.*[11] In fact, subscription publication moved away from the prestige and nationalistic subsidies that Defoe's *Caledonia* and Pope's translations had attracted to subscription as a form of charity for those deemed worthy, as the two thousand subscribers for *Poems on Various Subjects* by Jane Cave Winscom illustrate.[12]

The history of women's writing is one of tolerance and flowering followed, apparently inevitably, by constriction and repression. The eighteenth century, however, shows a remarkably consistent, hospitable atmosphere for women poets. When John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, wrote *A Letter from Artemesia in the Town to Chloe in the Country*, he was expressing an attitude that the contemporaries of women writing after 1730 could scorn and that both men and women labeled "prejudice": "Cursed if you fail, and scorned though you succeed!" Mary Masters published her first volume of poetry as *Poems on Several Occasions. By a Young Gentleman* in 1724, but the 1733 edition proudly bore her name. A good marker for the change is the contrast between Anne Killigrew's *Upon the Saying That My Verses Were Made by Another* (1686) and Masters's *To a Gentleman who questioned my being the Author of the foregoing Verses.* Killigrew's poem begins with

the "history" of her prayer to the "Queen of Verse" and the response to publication: "What ought t'have brought me honour, brought me shame! / Like Aesop's painted jay I seem'd to all, / Adorned in plumes I not my own could call." The poem ends, "I willingly accept Cassandra's fate, / To speak the truth, although believ'd too late" (Fullard, 21–22). Masters's poem, with its irreverent, mock humility, is a dramatic contrast: "A Genius may supply the Pedant's Art. / Hence 'tis, that I, unletter'd Maid, pretend / To paraphrase a Psalm, or praise a Friend; / . . . / Nature's strong Impulse gives my Fancy Wings." Both women insist, as Masters says, that "the Poem, howsoe'er design'd, / Is a true Picture of the Author's Mind." Killigrew uses as her example "Orinda," but Masters uses herself as the example and ends with the comic proof: "You'll plainly see, in almost ev'ry Line, / Distinguishing Defects to prove them Mine."[13] She dares to joke and can assume that her readers know more women poets than Killigrew could. Her attitude is cheeky, a strong contrast to Killigrew's disappointment and carefully veiled outrage and plea for fair play. Killigrew's poem is also highly polished; her smooth heroic couplets are filled with classical allusions. Masters also uses heroic couplets, but her language is simple and vernacular with occasional references to poetic diction, as when she asserts that she has the right to "sing" of "flow'ry Meadow, or a purling Stream."

The widespread public acceptance of women as poets grew rapidly. Thomas Seward's "The Female Right to Literature" (1748) was praised and frequently reprinted, and John Duncombe's *The Feminiad. A Poem* was published as a monograph in 1754 and reprinted in such highly visible places as Dodsley's *Collections* and *The Lady's Poetical Magazine* (1782). A 1761 review of Carter's *Poems on Several Occasions* began: "There never was perhaps an age wherein the fair sex made so conspicuous a figure with regard to literary accomplishments as in our own. We may all remember the time, when a woman who could *spell* was looked on as an extraordinary phenomenon, and a *reading* and *writing* wife was considered as a miracle; but the case at present is quite otherwise. Learning is now grown so fashionable among all the ladies."[14] Both Duncombe and this reviewer treated the women as sources of national pride. Even though the debate over *whether* women should learn and write had become one over *what* they should learn and write, by the 1780s it was a commonplace that England took pride in the large number of "female authors . . . possessed of such indisputable merit" and believed that "women's learning might be a source of national pride."[15]

Although poetry by women from the earliest times survives, Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn made poetry seem an endeavor possible for middle-class women.

In George Colman and Bonnell Thornton's *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, the collection that began to set the canon of women's poetry, Behn, then acknowledged to be an excellent poet, was given the most space and represented by twenty-seven poems, and Philips by eleven. Often cast as polar opposites, the two women were more alike in their literary aspirations than they were different. Philips's poetry evoked Simone de Beauvoir's counteruniverse of female friendship and private-sphere pleasures, while Behn's poetry, although often set unabashedly in public-sphere debates, also celebrates the pleasures of the private. Behn's poetry was praised for its quality; she was depicted by Daniel Defoe in *The Pacificator* (1700) as one of the great poets welcoming John Dryden to Heaven. She had been invited by men, including Dryden, to contribute to prestigious commercial poetic ventures, yet she also wrote many pastoral and friendship poems. Philips had published two plays and been the first woman to have a play produced on the Dublin and London stages (*Pompey* in February 1663 and January 1664, respectively). She died while preparing a volume of her poetry for publication,[16] and Aphra Behn was known for the attitude she expressed in her challenging lines, "What has poor Woman done that she must be, / Debar'd from Sense and Sacred Poetrie."[17] Both had gained access to publication and production through powerful men who were influential in the theatrical and political worlds. Both engaged their world, in Kathleen Swaim's description of Philips, "rewriting the experience that power and history have written upon" them. "In a quite deliberate choice," they positioned themselves both personally and politically.[18]

By the end of the seventeenth century Philips was firmly established as what men would allow women poets to be, while Behn was on her way to immortality as one of the unholy triumvirate of wits, in the company of Delarivière Manley and Eliza Haywood. Women recognized the power of the chaste-versus-transgressive paradigm, and it is still frequently invoked, as when critics contrast Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Mary Robinson, Charlotte Smith, Helen Maria Williams, and Ann Yearsley to Elizabeth Carter, Hester Chapone, Anna Seward, and Hannah More either in their politics or in their love life. Jane Brereton, for example, wrote:

> The *Behns*, the *Manleys*, head this motley Train,
> Politely lewd and wittily prophane;
> Their Wit, their fluent Style (which all must own)
> Can never for their Levity atone.
> . . . . . .
> First, our Orinda, spotless in her Fame,

> As chaste in Wit, rescued our Sex from shame:
> And now, when *Heywood*'s soft, seducing Style
> Might heedless Youth and Innocence beguile,
> Angelic Wit and purest Thoughts agree,
> In tuneful *Singer*, and great *Winchilsea*.[19]

Numerous other women found Philips congenial. Many of the best poems of the century are addressed to friends or "role models," other women poets, or women such as Mary Astell, Elizabeth Montagu (to whom Hester Chapone dedicated a volume of her works), and Queen Caroline. Yet Behn influenced at least as many poems with her greater poetic skill and her stubborn insistence on having her say on public issues. The women poets of the first two decades of the eighteenth century were a diverse group, but one characterized by early access to fine libraries and by having leisure to write. After midcentury, working-class women joined an increasingly disparate group of women who published and, perhaps more notably, could earn at least some part of their sustenance as poets.

Although Philips was made to exemplify feminine virtue, Behn inaugurated the moral stance that women poets would claim as their own and institutionalize by the end of the century. Women's poetry was associated with morality and moral issues throughout the period. In fact, poetry was the privileged literary form, and its destiny was to enunciate national and personal morality. As Elizabeth Eger has written, "It is perhaps difficult to realize the central significance of poetry within eighteenth-century culture in relation to a developing sense of morality."[20] Behn includes numerous social and political judgments in her poems, prologues, and epilogues, and some of her poems, such as *On a Conventicle*, are viciously political ("Behold that Race, whence *England*'s Woes proceed, / The Viper's Nest . . ."). More typical are a series of poems written at the time of Charles II's death and James's coronation, such as *A Pindarick on the Death of Our Late Sovereign*, in which Behn adroitly exploited the panegyric's potential for defining "ideal monarch" and critiquing policy.[21] Her *Poem humbly dedicated to the Great Patern of Piety and Virtue Catherine Queen Dowager* provided a model for later works such as Mary Chudleigh's *On the Death of His Highness the Duke of Gloucester*, an important example of the poetry that defined British female virtue.

The poets of the first decades of the eighteenth century had absorbed the strategies of both Philips and Behn, but Behn was perhaps more important to them. These poets were determined to insert their voices into the public sphere and, like Behn, judge people and their time by the principles and ideals that those in power purported to hold. Carole Barash describes Anne Finch's creation of "a

public lineage, based on the private Philips, and a submerged debt to the public Behn": "In her repeated — almost ritualistic — gestures of muted political opposition and collective, symbolically feminine emotional inwardness, Finch creates the patterns that will dominate female lyric poetry for the next century and a half."[22] Although writing very different kinds of poetry, Sarah Fyge Egerton, Mary Barber, Mary Jones, Clara Reeve, Mary Darwall, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld could be described in the same way. Far earlier than the novelists, they made poetry "a part of the new public sphere, in which discussions of politics and private life could meet."[23] For many poets religion was one of the strongest elements in their identity, and their poetry therefore incorporates this strain of morality. Poems such as Elizabeth Singer Rowe's *The Vision* and Elizabeth Carter's *On the Death of Mrs. Rowe* trace their poetic subjects ("Now war, now love, and beauty's force," Rowe recites) and conclude that their poetic gifts are, in Carter's words, "for nobler Purposes assign'd, / To raise the Thoughts, and moralize the Mind." At the end of the century, Rebecca Manners wrote that "Poesy, with pleasing guile" leads the reader "To the sense of moral truth."[24] Throughout the century the religious is the political, and although some poets are more secular and explicit about earthly consequences, others never forget the eternal world in which they live and its overarching judgments. These strains were inextricably blended in the Age of Sensibility, when many poets constructed themselves as the epitome of that structure of feeling. Charlotte Smith, Anna Seward, and almost every poet of the second half of the century thought of her- or himself as a person of sensibility. They expressed horror at the cruelty and violence and even insensitivity and rudeness they saw around them. As Andrew Ashfield has said, "Literature became no longer the best vehicle for moral precepts, it became the actual site of moral activity."[25]

It could be argued that the women poets of the 1790s had inherited and brought to maturity the potential for power in the public sphere. When Josiah Wedgwood implored Anna Seward to write an antislavery poem, he invoked the moral outrage of her *Monody on the unfortunate Major André* (1781), which had brought George Washington to defend himself against the charge of dishonoring a noble foe. These women poets had become a deliberative body, a group that perceived their writing, and were perceived themselves, as having a right to intervene in national life and its debates.[26] Hannah More's *The Slave Trade* and *Slavery, A Poem*, for example, condemn her countrymen as white savages and robbers who were "abhorred." Some of these women poets clearly saw themselves enlisted in the same causes. Williams's *Ode on the Peace* includes a tribute to

Seward's *Monody*, and Williams's *Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave Trade* helped inspire poems by More and Ann Yearsley. The politicalization of the woman poet was the result both of social, patriarchal forces and of the writers' choices, but they came to wield power as moral judges by weighing people and actions as Christians and Englishmen. Just as the early-eighteenth-century women poets had often found their country*men* worse than "Turks," later women invoked the infamous Spanish slavers and the suffering of innocents in France. Some critics have identified idioms common to their poetry that "point to a broadly disseminated literary vocabulary that connects the history of feminine authorship to racial politics" — and racial politics always includes moral claims. Their poetry often evaluates and attempts to direct "progress."[27] Anne K. Mellor goes so far as to say that the women critics and poets "constructed a coherent program for the production and consumption of literature, clearly defining the proper goals of literature and the nature of the aesthetic response."[28] To their credit, the women advocated and attempted to produce poetry that elevated humankind not only through its moral precepts but also by its moving, powerful art. Mary Scott lists some of their values in *The Female Advocate* (1774): "Taste, spirit, learning, elegance combin'd," "Fancy's visionary ray," "vivid intellectual paintings." Her poem describes the effects and aims of poetry as she catalogs the praiseworthy women. "We feel thy feelings, glow with all thy fires," she writes of Anna Laetitia Barbauld's poetry, "may thy polish'd page / Refine the manners of a trifling age."[29]

How and by whom poetry was read changed even more than the degree of acceptance of women poets. Moreover, each quarter-century's changes seem to reinforce rather than decrease the differences between their time and ours. Few of us would read poetry as a means of social advancement, as a source of news, or as mass entertainment, but eighteenth-century people increasingly did. For example, miscellanies, anthologies, and collections of poems rode the obsession with developing and displaying taste that Joseph Addison and Richard Steele had placed within the reach of all readers. In this environment, poetry went far beyond bestowing cultural capital to purport to offer cultured ways to feel, think, and respond. People were encouraged to memorize poems because "the mind is thus stored with a lasting treasure of sentiments and ideas."[30] Characters in novels came to be judged by their poetic taste.

In spite of the fact that print materials did not become less expensive,[31] they did become infinitely more accessible. Lucyle Werkmeister estimates that some papers and magazines came to have thirty readers per copy as they were passed around or as newspaper societies formed. People read to each other everywhere:

women took turns reading as they sewed or even canned vegetables, families and friends gathered for evenings of reading, and the literate read to the illiterate in public places. Coffeehouses and even shops continued to subscribe to periodicals and newspapers to draw and hold patrons in their establishments. Defoe had described the chairmen around Whitehall reading papers to each other, Irish visitors were surprised to see the like of tinsmiths come into coffeehouses for punch and to read a paper,[32] and reading circles, societies, and clubs continued to increase. Poetry was consumer news in a century now recognized as obsessed with novelty and timeliness. The subjects of Cave's poetry contests, such as Queen Caroline's grotto and "The Christian Hero," were news and attracted almost every kind of reader—and would-be poet. By publishing topical poems like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's and the sonnets and Spenserian adaptations that would become subjects of discussion in periodicals, Robert Dodsley contributed to the phenomenon of poetry as central to the cultural life of an increasingly print- and present-oriented populace.

By midcentury, methods of retailing books had exploded, literary societies existed in almost every town, auctions and used-book stalls proliferated, and circulating and subscription libraries had rapidly come into their own. Libraries held thousands of titles, as Ann Ireland's in Leicester and Joseph Barber's in Newcastle did.[33] As Barbara Benedict writes, "During the eighteenth-century, literature was transformed into mass entertainment,"[34] and poetry actually enjoyed that distinction. In a finding to brood over, Jan Fergus tells us that in the sample of booksellers' records she discusses in "Provincial Servants' Reading in the Eighteenth Century," the only book bought for entertainment by a servant before 1770 was *Visions in Verse, for the entertainment and instruction of younger minds.* Her list of fourteen literature books includes a striking number of poetry books: James Thomson's *Works*, the first two volumes of Bell's *Poets*, and Edward Young's *Night Thoughts.*[35] Experts on eighteenth-century readers agree that by the 1770s all classes were reading prolifically and widely, and they often mention "farmers, artisans, and their wives," as Fergus does. The extent to which poetry functioned as popular entertainment can be gauged by three activities that prior criticism has often overlooked: singing, reading aloud, and public poetry recitations.

The popularity of musical entertainments in spaces from the most private to the most public[36] and the rapid movement of songs from the theater into the music and drawing rooms are familiar. We know next to nothing, however, about the part that women poets played, but the number of their poems titled "Song"

ought to awaken our interest. Some women poets owed their initial recognition to songs, as Mary Jones did to *The Lass of the Hill*, while other women's poems survived primarily because they wrote numerous songs, as Susanna Blamire, author of *What Ails This Heart o' Mine* and *The Chelsea Pensioners*, did. Carolina, Baroness Nairne, rewrote Scottish traditional songs. Her *Lays from Strathearn* and many songs in it retained their popularity for more than fifty years, and the *Dictionary of National Biography* notes that she "ranks with Hogg in her Jacobite songs, but in several she stands first and alone." Even servants were willing to pay for songs; Fergus notes that one purchased *The Aviary: or, Magazine of British Melody. Consisting of a collection of one thousand three hundred and forty four songs* in 1747.[37] Songs were an important part of collections, as the commercially minded *Poetical Museum. Containing Songs and Poems on Almost Every Subject* (1784) suggests.[38] Among the more than six thousand "verse collections of multiple authorship" published between 1700 and 1800 were numerous songbooks, and it is hard to find an anthology without poems that had become popular songs.[39]

Recitation and reading aloud became cultivated social skills. Thomas Sheridan's famous *Course of Lectures on Elocution* (1762) legislated that "a just delivery consists in a distinct articulation of words, pronounced in proper tones, suitably varied to the sense, and the emotions of the mind; with due observation of accent; of emphasis, in its several gradations; of rests or pauses of the voice, in proper places and well measured degrees of time; and the whole accompanied with expressive looks, and significant gesture."[40] His emphases on the reader's responsibility for performance and on conveying both sense and emotion clearly and affectively are found in accounts of good and bad readers in novels, letters, and diaries. The character "Ellis" in Frances Burney's *Wanderer* "proved alike her understanding and her feeling" by reading Alexander Pope, Nicolas Boileau, and other authors brilliantly as she "gave force and meaning to every word."[41] As this 1814 text shows, reading and reciting poetry well became one of the required accomplishments for women, and it increased the popularity of poetry considerably.

John Sitter points out that it is easy "to underestimate the poetic richness" of eighteenth-century poetry and to glide over "the placid surfaces of eighteenth-century urbanity." The poetry, however, is "waiting to be *produced* by active readers," "brought to life by imaginative interpretation."[42] A well-read or well-recited poem still comes to life in ways that silent reading seldom accomplishes, and the history of reading poetry in the century yields important evidence about the revolutionary shift in readers who gave up their role as judges to enjoy being acted upon rather than acting.[43] People came miles to hear the elderly Anna

Seward read poems, most notably Gottfried August Bürger's *Lenore*. In the preface to his *Poems* (1778) Bürger had written that all poetry "can and should be popular. For that is the seal of its perfection."[44] This standard, one that many writers, publishers, and readers of poetry in England seemed to embrace, underscores the differences between that century's literary culture and ours.

Reading aloud was a major social and domestic activity. Because books were both scarce and expensive, all classes invited friends to their homes to hear a new book. In addition to entertainment, reading had been for some time religious and moral discipline. Along with sermons, religious poetry could be read on Sundays by the most pious. Defoe's and Richardson's real and imagined well-ordered families work in family circles while someone reads. Naomi Tadmor quotes the description of a scene in which Richardson read while the ladies of his house made ruffles, border, flowering, and patterns.[45] There are numerous references to servants reading to employers, both as part of their service to a mistress or master and as part of a circle working and listening. Although almost unnoticed, some of the popular kinds of poetry were ideal for the changes in the print world and for the kinds of reading experiences that the essay periodical and novel had created. Many of the poems printed in these venues were short and topical and delivered a familiar experience or emotion in simple language. Anecdotes in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* and in novels did the same, and the phenomenal increase in the popularity of the metrical tale testifies to the love of narrative, characters in distress, and even gothic settings.

Poetry recitations by actors became public entertainment and in homes rivaled better-known society entertainments. The actor John Henderson's "English Readings" drew packed houses at Freemason's Hall in the 1780s.[46] In James Cobb's satire of them, Kitty, the maid, explains that "the *rage* for English Readings" reached their provincial town through "Mrs. Poplin, the Irish mantuamaker, who came down from London." The characters equate the readings with puppet shows, country dances, and cardplaying, and of the reading contest that Mrs. Poplin and Kitty's master, Bootekin the shoemaker, agree to stage, the most sensible character says sadly that it will be a "burlesque" of "a rational and elegant amusement."[47] In contrast, to have Sarah Siddons do a private reading was the height of social success, and King George named her "Preceptress of English Reading" and summoned her to read at the royal palaces. She read at social gatherings, in her own home, and, after she retired, in small public halls. In addition to doing parts she had played, she also read Milton, the author whose works may have been the most popular for public reading in the last quarter of

the century. Perhaps because of this success and because of the position of poetry in the culture, when she retired from the Bath stage, she recited a poem that she had written. Thus, she demonstrated the feminine accomplishment of writing occasional verse. She also recited a poem as her farewell address at Covent Garden in 1812, this time one by her nephew Horace Twiss. As Siddons's *Memoirs* illustrate, she continued to promote her family as much as she could, and this poem by Twiss was described as "personal" and "poignant."[48] It was, however, as much a theatrical set piece as a commissioned autobiographical expression:

> Judges and Friends! to whom the tragic strain
> Of nature's feeling never spoke in vain,
> Perhaps your hearts, when years have glided by,
> And past emotions wake a fleeting sigh,
> May think on her, whose lips have pour'd so long
> The charmed sorrows of *your* Shakespeare's song.[49]

Addressing the audience in the conventional manner of prologues and epilogues, but also invoking the mythical, personal relationship that Siddons had often tried to create and many in the audience probably wanted to feel,[50] she quickly associates herself with the great national playwright. Mary Pritchard had done the same thing at her retirement in 1768, Mary Robinson invoked the Shakespeare parts she had played in subtle allusions throughout her poetic career, and, as the *European Magazine* said in its article on Siddons's retirement, David Garrick had done something similar in his tribute to James Quin and Colley Cibber in the prologue to *The Clandestine Marriage*.[51] Some reviewers described Siddons's recitation as having "great feeling and effect," and the poem includes many of the elements of fashionable poetry. It opens with an echo of the claim of universality from *Elegy in a Country Church-Yard:* "Who but has not felt . . . / Who has not sigh'd. . . ." The second verse is filled with images of nostalgia, melancholy, and the pleasures of memory. The imagery of seasons and times of day in the next verse set up the resolution, that memory of "the sunshine of your smile" will lend "a moonlight tint" to "the shadows of the coming night." Although some actors spoke directly to the audience in prose as their retirement gesture, the performance of a poem or poetic speech was customary. By reciting, Siddons actually distanced herself from the audience, as several reviewers noted, even as she appeared to be both expressing and shielding her own overwhelming feelings.[52] Dressed in a shining white dress, she performed a piece both sentimental and evocative of her greatest skills and parts. This gendered gesture underscores

women's identification with poetry and the cultural capital it conferred upon them.

By the end of the century women were major producers, consumers, and performers of poetry. Books about them, such as *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, and for them, such as Goldsmith's *Poems for Young Ladies*, joined the ever-growing stacks of volumes of verse. Poetry had gone from being a political or coterie activity to addressing a large, diverse, engaged audience that both cared about quality and followed fashion. Poetry was "woven into the fabric of genteel social life," and women were not on the margins but reading and writing within communities of readers, present and imagined, from "a legitimate space within emergent modern culture."[53] The editor of *The Lady's Poetical Magazine* (four volumes, 1781–82) gave an opinion in his introductory poem that was shared by many: ". . . in those arts which humanize the mind / [Women] boast an equal pow'r with mankind."[54] Poetry was established deep in people's ideologies of self, class, and nation.

The culture's faith in the power of poetry, however, did ebb and flow. Pope represented a high point, and the political activism of the patriot poets of Thomson's time declined only to rise again with the women poets in the 1790s. Behn, Jane Barker, Finch, and other women wrote eloquently about the Stuarts, but a torrent of war and abolitionist poetry by Yearsley, Seward, Amelia Opie, More, and other women pours forth at the end of the eighteenth century. These poets had grown up watching Charlotte Smith's success, and they became more engaged with history and more willing to assume an evaluative and even prophetic stance. Like Smith, they insisted "on addressing social issues—often radical political ones."[55]

Systems, Gender, and Persistent Issues

As we stare across this largely uncharted wilderness, we are confronted by numerous questions: Who are the best, the most important, of these poets? By what and whose measures are they the best and the most important? In what ways are our existing literary histories and paradigms inadequate and inaccurate, and what would improve them? What theoretical and methodological tools are we lacking, and why do these classificatory and evaluative concerns matter? Literary movements are not made by single great poets, as the canon of Great Men implies; they are collective efforts that express a number of things—the taste of a time, the longings and aspirations of a people, the creative genius of a poet, and the feelings of individual writers. To what literary movements were women poets

essential? Although it is a praiseworthy achievement to add women's names to the canon or even to the mainstream narrative that is the literary history of poetry, the ultimate goal must be to distinguish women's larger contributions. In other words, where can we discern a woman or women predominating or leading movements that significantly modified a poetic form or became an established or temporarily important kind of poetry? In what ways, in their own time, were they important participants in literary and social movements? Where can we distinguish forms that they played a major part in developing and inserting into literary history? What themes and special issues did they bring to the fore? Did women introduce new uses, new "work," for poetic forms to do in the culture? In writing about sex, love, marriage, politics, war, money, and class, what did their perspectives, experiences, and shared subordinate position offer that we do not get from men? How important is that?[56] In fact, before we ask how a woman's writing is different from men's, we must determine whether it was indeed different, and we must be sure we are not dismissing or condemning it simply because it is similar. In what cases have women's defiance and resistance to male monopolistic pretensions to own poetry resulted in revisionary creativity? Which destabilizing and adaptive strategies are most effective in expressing women's experiences? Which are strikingly artful?

Given that we have been blind to their models and mentors, their aspirations, and their desires and achievements, that more than half of the poetry we need is not easily accessible, and that few of these poets have received close study, it should be no surprise that we cannot identify the women poets who might necessitate revisions in the poetic landscape and are worthy of sustained study. Since so many of the traditional measures of literary excellence and aesthetic achievement require close, expert work with texts, it should be expected that women's poetry is undervalued. This book furthers some basic evaluative practices, including, as critics do with the work of male poets, searches for examples of unusual excellence within a form, as well as evidence of sustained achievement as a poet. It also counters some crippling critical practices, such as what Margaret Ezell has called "the search for sameness,"[57] that have indeed obscured certain kinds of women and women's writings. I would go further and say that it has obliterated specific poets and kinds of poems by even the best-known and most appreciated women.

A frequent demand is for "*formal* excellence of *individual* works of art," and there is continuous appreciation for poets who can "actualize" the great forms of poetry. Such texts will "stand up to close readings," reveal themselves to be "complex," and, as David Hume asserted, withstand evaluation of the text's "aim"

and be "deemed more or less perfect, as it is more or less fitted to attain this end."[58] It is problematic, of course, to defend the quality of women's works by an aesthetic now recognized as hierarchically gendered and historically constructed, but doing so is an illuminating exercise. Charles Hinnant, for instance, takes some pains to demonstrate that submitting Finch's poetry to these kinds of analyses is richly rewarding and underscores the fact that feminists' "broader enquiry" into the situation of women and women writers in the period "has so far failed to undertake any fundamental revaluation of the relative position of individual women poets, vis-à-vis the canon" (Hinnant, 14). At many times in literary history—including the eighteenth century—critics have judged poems by how successfully they actualize the potential of a form, and that exercise, combined with consideration of how compellingly they revise or modify it, is useful in understanding and reevaluating women's poems.

Important writers have distinctive styles and signature poems and strategies. They are categorized as inventors rather than reproducers, and the gendered echoes of production/reproduction reveal themselves here. To which women poets of the eighteenth century can we assign signature poems? Are we looking for and arguing our selections? In fact, as such books as Mary Sloan's *Moving Borders: Three Decades of Innovative Writing by Women* and reviews of it demonstrate, the struggle against the stereotype that "women prefer conventional literary forms [perhaps] because they allow them to express their situation within patriarchy" is still being fought.[59] We have been deaf to women's self-authenticating gestures and statements of self-definition, an identity they have developed, discovered, claimed, and are willing to display. For many of us, Pope's greatest poems are his late satires in which he performs himself as citizen, friend, son, and poet. Wordsworth's great *Prelude* is especially gripping because of its struggles with self-definition. Appreciation of this element of agency comes from a knowledge of a major part of, if not the poet's entire, *oeuvre*, including access to at least some revisions. For which women poets do we have such access? Yet, as I argue in this book, the signature poems, the strong individual voices, and the acts of self-definition exist and await discovery.

There are dangers, however, when women achieve distinctiveness. Unlike the men, who are willfully playing out the anxiety of influence, they may be accused of ignorance or botching the job. Or they may create something so original as to be "unreadable"—as Annette Kolodny famously said, we read what we know how to read with pleasure. For example, I would say that Anne Finch's *The Spleen* is becoming unreadable to us. One of the most reprinted poems of the eighteenth

century, it is currently being reported as "out of favor" by the two most prominent Finch scholars today. Significantly, it did not prove very amenable to feminist readings, and today's fans of poetry are not prepared to master its key topical allusion or appreciate its difficult structure and metaphysical bent.

To some extent my book implicitly problematizes without devaluing gender as the most important determinant of subjectivity and the light in which every poem by a woman is washed by its author. We now take for granted that different subject positions are produced within specific social formations. Some women poets seem always conscious of their sex and write primarily from that vantage point; others seem to make conscious efforts to resist this awareness and whatever expectations and limitations seem tied to it; and still others seem to believe that poetry writing is simply human and that when they do it they are androgynous. Gender is always in complex relationships and interactions with other components of identity, such as class and life experiences. Women contest as well as enact gender identity, and they inscribe and reinscribe gender difference in myriad ways. In some of the women's work we can actually see their coming to terms with sex being a more important determinant of social position than class and "accomplishment" becoming an increasingly important and inflected principle of status. Especially before the period when sex became the primary marker of identity, gender must be seen as just one of many important factors. As Ann Messenger once wisely wrote, "A poet is not only male or female, but also simply human."[60]

Poetry is devilishly hard to write—for men and women. It demands music, structure, sense; it is not as easy as Pope's observation that sound must "seem an echo to the sense" suggests.[61] The poet Louise Bogan once said that "lyric poetry embodies an intense concentration of feeling occurring when the moment of experience the poet has to express is especially rich and complex in its content, saturated, perhaps, with reflection and imaginative association . . . [it] requires a very full and extensive use of his [*sic*] art." Great poetry is written from the heights and depths of commitment, whether to a cause or to a compelling vision or to the art *and* craft of poetry itself. There must be talent, perhaps even genius, but there must also be obsessive experimentation and revision. Perhaps affirming "I am a Poet" creates the condition of poetry. This is not to say that gender is not a central category of analysis in my study, but there are other major categories and considerations needed to balance it, such as poetry's own internal history, the time in which a poem is written and read,[62] and the lives of those who write it. It is as important to recognize the ways that being a woman are advantageous as to

take into account complications and handicaps. Women at this moment in history were fortunate, perhaps, because there was not yet a dominant ideology of the sex, and what they might achieve was a wide-open question.[63] *Woman* had not yet been defined as strictly as it would be in Victorian times, and many expressed their freedom within poems admitting gendering forces. Theirs was an art that did not so much put ego on the line as nurture the ego and often admitted its relationship with others and with comfortable values within a community of writers.[64] In some cases, as with the fable, they seized a historically political or "indecent" form and made it a flexible, effective instrument of their own.

Just because men delivered such categorical maxims as "There is a kind of variety of Sexes in Poetry, as well as in Mankind: that as the peculiar excellence of the Feminine Kind, is smoothness and beauty: so strength is the chief praise of the Masculine"[65] does not mean that most women were persuaded. What women wrote and released is the best guide to the force of such statements. Just as Finch did in *The Critick and the Writer of Fables* and other poems, women comment on the uses of poetic kinds that some considered inappropriate for women. Most of these poems defend their choices, and many include clever, rather veiled attacks on their critics. In *The Defense of my self*, for instance, Mary Masters answers a man's rebuke for writing satire by challenging him to use his pen to fight vice and evil rather than chide her trivial transgression.[66] Demonstrating the playful "parodic proliferation" that Judith Butler has identified as a strategy of resistance in *Gender Trouble*, these poets, like Mary Savage in her *Address to the Muse*, often have great fun with clichés. Savage assures the Muse that she is not asking for help "to indulge, in the hopes of applause; / Nor to speak to the men, in defence of our cause." The Muse in turn twits her about the poetic modes:

> If serious I came — 'twas too much for your mind;
> In sentiment drest, I was thought too refin'd;
> If satire I nam'd — in a fright you would say,
> They surely with int'rest the debt will repay.

The poem ends with the Muse demanding, "Either follow your genius or let me alone." Every woman poet seems to have written about the poetic kinds and their cultural and gender status and, especially in playful and parodic poems, taken stands that can only be described as revisionary, resisting, and even subverting. Bringing such poems together, ordering and contextualizing them, and reconsidering the impact of gender pressures on poetry not only promises to give us a

different, fuller landscape but also contributes to our understanding of women's history, of contemporary opinions about poetic kinds, and of genre itself, which a variety of theorists have demonstrated is one of the most powerful determining forces exerted on any writer.

The choice of genre reveals a great deal about the woman, her education, her aims and purposes, and her aspirations. Women were, after all, working within genres and poetic conventions created and shaped by men. For all the opportunities to use them as men did, to appropriate them for their own ends, and to juxtapose masculine and feminine in revelatory ways, women's relationships to established poetic forms are often complicated. Perhaps the most complex are to the most "masculine," such as epic and satire, and to the most "feminine," such as the pastoral.[67] Women do write about things that men do not in ways that they do not, such as marriage and women's position within it. The ways women poets conceive freedom and achieve identity seem to be fundamentally different from the ways male poets do. Collectively, women's poetry opposes views of woman as victim and as love *object*. They often express scorn and self-sovereignty when described in these terms. How they imagine themselves, other women, gender, sexualities, men, and a moral world are endlessly fascinating and individual.

By midcentury, with the wealth of reviews and published poetry in periodicals, women knew one another's work and, what can never be underestimated, knew how it was being interpreted and received. Some of them left evidence of how they thought about their work and their place in Great Britain's literary scene and even in literary history. Eighteenth-century poetry is full of voices and of creations of the self as dramatic characters, as poems such as Mary Barber's *To a Lady, who commanded me to send her an Account in Verse, how I succeeded in my Subscription* and Pope's *Epistle to Arbuthnot* make abundantly clear. It was an especially liberating and enjoyable technique for women. The creation of voices and the striking differences among the voices of Finch, Egerton, Pilkington, Jones, and Masters, Smith, Seward, and Opie reveal a great deal about each poet, about gendering forces, and about each decade's dominant structures of feeling.

These voice-filled poems and women's situations suggest different emphases that retard forcing them into systems with which they had complex relationships. Ample evidence exists that many of them knew that poetry was a place to be themselves, to experiment with different selves and voices as they invented and circulated counterdiscourses. Constantia Grierson, who trusted Barber to publish her poems after her death, wrote with joy to her, "For different themes we in

thy verses view; / Themes in themselves sublime and new."[68] Here she is celebrating the originality and significance of "foremothers" and sisters and women's distinctive contributions to literature. Mary Robinson created a panoply of pseudonyms, including Laura Maria, Tabitha Bramble, Sappho, Lesbia, and Portia, that Judith Pascoe has called "a sustained and sustaining experiment in self-representation."[69] These voices gave her the freedom that her notorious life as the Prince of Wales's "Perdita" restricted.

Working in a genre that is "filled to overflowing with representations of her and displacements of 'her' by the representations others make,"[70] women writers revise and create poetic forms. Although they often write about politics, war, and national events, they are prone to eschew the great imperial themes outlined in books such as Suvir Kaul's *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire* in favor of resonant portraits of the implications for ordinary human beings. They demonstrate an eternal truth: any crisis—political, biological, natural—is always a moral crisis for a community and affects its citizens personally. Rather than being engaged in "attempts to endow the nation with literary, cultural, and iconic capital adequate to its burgeoning status as a global power,"[71] they have a different national project, one both more personal and at least as challenging: daring Great Britain to live up to its past and its stated ideals. What we see at the end of the century is the coming to maturity of the public themes always present in women's poetry.

Veiled or indirect as their manner often is, women indisputably wrote to participate in the great public debates of their time, to intervene in the public sphere, to shape mores, and to mold opinion. Little noticed is women's engagement with Britain's increasingly global perspective. Mary Jones's Elvira rushes to a ship to have the first selection of china in *Of Desire*, a poem that brings to mind Matthew Prior's *Hans Carvel*, in which the wife "first of all the Town, was told, Where newest INDIA Things were sold" (lines 21–22). The global perspective manifests itself in every kind of poetry, from the lightest to the most somber. Ann Murry casts contempt on the modern money market that has created nabobs and characters such as Sir Charles Modish in her *Tête à Tête, Or Fashionable Pair* (1779). Modish says, "As for myself, a Patriot I will turn, / Yet for my private good with ardour burn, / Oppose the Minister in all his views, / And make my fortune in the way I choose." Anne Home Hunter creates *North American Death Song* to celebrate the courage of Native Americans (1801). Susanna Blamire wrote poems on returning soldiers and men from India and other parts of the empire. Her popular poem *The Nabob* (1802), written to the tune of the popular song "Traveller's Return," follows a Scot returning from thirty years in India:

I sought again my native land
Wi' mony hopes and fears:
Wha kens gin the dear friends I left
May still continue mine?
Or gin I e'er again shall taste
The joys I left langsyne?[72]

Blamire's poems give a sense of the far-flung fields of England's wars, and even her ballads of love are animated by the effects of war on ordinary citizens.[73] The late poetry is increasing global and records the stretch of England's wars. Men are described as dying in India, Egypt, and New York—in every corner of the world. Often describing the cause of war as "pure ambition," as Amelia Opie does in *Lines written at Norwich on the First News of Peace*, the women poets never find that Great Britain's gains balance the costs at home.[74] Several of them, including Charlotte Smith and Mary Darwall, lost sons abroad. The foreign settings are uniformly depicted as lonely wildernesses or distant, bleak plains dyed red in blood.

The ocean becomes a powerful symbol of the global reach of empire and Britain's distant sons. Anne Bannerman personifies the ocean as "unpitying and untrue," as a false, deceptive lover is, and concludes her sonnet *To the Ocean* (1800):

Whelm'st in thy watr'y breast the luckless crew,
And smil'st delighted in a scene so dark.
Such are thy dreadful trophies, ruthless main!
What are thy triumphs—but another's pain![75]

Her ambitious poem *The Genii* (1800) ranges a threatening, wild globe that includes allusions to actual catastrophes such as the earthquake at Lima that swept away the town of Callao.[76] "In every sea, dispart the foaming waves, / And yield their treasures. . . ," one address to the Genii begins, and these treasures are more likely to be death than wealth. The Genii explores "the frigid and torrid zones," and the poem is filled with dramatic imagery and horrid sounds, such as the "frightful" howlings of whales caught in whirlpools and the shrieks of a Negro pearl diver seized by a shark.[77] Throughout the poem, Bannerman describes sailors at the mercy of greedy rulers and merciless oceans. Helen Maria Williams's *Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave Trade* (1788) captures the conception that many of these poets had: "The gen'rous sailor, he,

who dares / All forms of danger, while he bears / The BRITISH Flag o'er untrack'd seas, / And spreads it on the polar breeze."[78] Mary Darwall and Charlotte Smith had personal experience with the empire, and both capture other common apprehensions. Darwall's son Frederick fought in Ceylon and India and died in Calcutta. Smith's son William rose to a judgeship in the Indian civil service; Lionel became a governor in the West Indies, with his brother George serving under him; Charles joined the army and died on a trip to the West Indies, and Nicholas was an ambassador to Persia.[79] In the spacious penultimate verse of *Studies by the Sea* (1819) Smith imagines the waves that she sees having touched India, the tropics, the equator, and having "raved to the Walruss's hollow roar."[80]

Agency and the "Marked Marker"

The author's sex has almost always been more important to readers than to the writers themselves. When it is known, sex is assigned to the voice and perspective and therefore becomes "one of the routine and immediate attributions" readers use to perform a series of gestures, including interpretation and valuation.[81] In the eighteenth century, when opinions about the nature of and possibilities for women were actively discussed and undergoing radical revision, this statement is doubly true. Women's work was read as something of a novelty but also as a source of evidence about the sex. A woman writer is always what Rachel Blau DuPlessis calls a "marked marker," "marked by the cultural attributes of Woman, gender, sexuality, the feminine, a whole bolus of contradictory representations that are as much her cultural inscription as ours"—and in this case, those of her eighteenth-century contemporaries as well.[82]

The most debilitating effect of being this "marked marker" is that agency, that is, the ability and will to act purposefully, independently, and self-consciously, is largely denied. As Gayatri Spivak explains, "The subject must identify itself with its self-perceived intention."[83] Somehow resisting or escaping being socialized into being primarily imitative, writers with agency are believed to have, and be committed to, agendas and serious experimentations. I am, by the way, aware of the perplexing question of whether I (and others) learn to recognize agency *or* if we create a master narrative and then confer agency in an absolutely arbitrary manner.

Critics seldom engage with the fundamental issue of which writers are granted agency, why, and how. I believe that these questions are important because it seems clear that the canon is formed around authors who are granted agency.

There are other ways that canons form, but *around* authors with agency may be the key way. When a writer has been awarded an immoderate degree of agency, as Richardson, Fielding, and Laurence Sterne traditionally have been, they are also seen as canon makers. Such writers have a line of followers. In other words, paradigms feature them, as is the case for Richardson/Fielding, and influence is said to be traceable, as it is in the sensibility movement and Sterne. Such writers then are awarded a firm, indisputable, lasting place in the canon. Lillian Robinson has rightly identified a group of followers other than authors writing in the genre type: those that carry out "successful critical promotion" of the writer to be canonized by, for instance, the "habitual" study and teaching of their works.[84] An example might be the quite accidental promotion in the late 1970s that Margaret Doody and I did of Haywood's *Fantomina* by sharing photocopies brought back from the British Library with such critics as William Warner and Susan Gubar. When critics discuss writers in the terms that they previously used for Defoe and Haywood, the agency and the influence of these writers are severely limited. F. R. Leavis, for instance, left Defoe out of the history of the novel and perpetrated the idea that he was "a photographer capturing everything before him and producing true art only by an occasional accident."[85] Interestingly, if it is too easy to imitate the canon maker, as Richardson has sometimes appeared to be to critics, then greater respect accrues to a writer like Fielding, who is represented as setting the bar of creativity impossibly high.

A fact seldom noticed is that when critics confer canonicity, they confer agency, as Ian Watt did when he ended his second chapter on Defoe magisterially: "Very few writers have *created for themselves* both a new subject and a new literary form to embody it" (emphasis mine).[86] The project of canonization by "followers" is easily discernible through this lens. Watt claimed that Defoe invented a new literary form to serve his own, self-recognized purposes, and that claim has been made for the most notable of canon makers: Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Congreve, Gay, Johnson, and Boswell, for instance. Just how this process operates can be seen schematically in innumerable cases, even for relatively minor figures. In the first edition of Abraham Cowley's works, Thomas Sprat wrote that Cowley's "imitation" of Pindar "may perhaps be thought rather a new sort of Writing than a restoring of an Ancient," and the more critics and poets learned about Pindar, the more they agreed.[87] In 1995 Howard Weinbrot described the English odes of the eighteenth century as "revolutionary" and devoted many pages of *Britannia's Issue* to them. Here we see how the process is continuously woven through literary history, as Weinbrot is making a renewed

claim for Sprat's assertion.[88] The claim of inventing a new literary form has also been made for Eliza Haywood by the feminist critics Jane Spencer, Margaret Anne Doody, and Ros Ballaster. Ballaster, for instance, argues that Haywood's amatory novels "mark the beginnings of an autonomous tradition in romantic fiction."[89] The path to the canonization of Aphra Behn is an especially obvious example, as essay after essay written since the late 1980s emphasizes her independence and agency. By quoting, for instance, from her preface to *The Dutch Lover* and her epilogue to *Sir Patient Fancy* ("Pray tell me then, / Why Women should not write as well as Men"), critics gave her an almost novelistic awareness of herself as writer, woman, and presence in the Habermasian public sphere. She had an agenda, things she wanted to say and stories she wanted to tell, and she had the literary repertoire of genres and strategies to make them art.

For reasons that we could recite *ad nauseum*, women have been denied agency—Joanna Russ has two hilarious chapters on women writers and this topic in *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. Anne Killigrew's *Upon the Saying My Verses Were Made by Another* is almost as familiar as the charge that Charlotte Lennox wrote most of *The Female Quixote* sitting on Samuel Johnson's lap with his hand guiding her pen. If we accept that being granted agency is inherent in canon making, then we have new questions to raise as we analyze literary history. This inquiry is an important theme in my investigation of what seems involved in reintroducing women into the literary landscape of eighteenth-century poetry. Expressions of new meanings and different realities often generate new forms, and it is startling to see the erasures literary historians have committed to protect a masculine genre and canon.

It seems easier to get agreement that the eighteenth-century poetic landscape needs revision to include women poets than to identify the women who necessitate the revisions and are worthy of sustained study. One of the goals of this book is to begin to imagine what those revisions would look like. And that brings me back to agency, that mark of self-consciousness that opens the door to setting an individual "signature" on a body of work, to receiving the title of "serious, experimental, original artist," and to qualifying as a candidate for canonicity. Writers who are granted agency are granted careers, are seen as dedicated to their art, to "walking worthy of their calling" as poets. *Career* implies experimentation, progress, and incremental mastery of the craft's skills. It is intriguing to contemplate how seriously we have taken male poets' own statements and cultural signals that they are Poets; believing them, we have looked for Poetry in their works and traced their careers, undoubtedly learning what to valorize in this way.

By midcentury, women had numerous, useful models for a career as a poet. Besides Behn and Philips, they had Finch, Montagu, Chudleigh, Carter, and Rowe, all different in their orientation to writing and in the kinds of verse they wrote. Evidence of the enabling power of these models abounds in, for instance, dedications, correspondence, and poems of tribute. Many of these women's careers had a recognizable shape in which such things as their "progress" in mastering forms, metrics, and other elements of the craft and their ambitions are clearly visible. In fact, and this may be one of the obscuring factors, many women poets became increasingly "work integrated," as opposed to "work adapted," and so their writing and their other activities and occupations inseparably permeate one another.[90] Whether we take Sarah Fyge Egerton, Mary Barber, Laetitia Pilkington, Charlotte Smith, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, or Anna Seward, we can map a career, a *poetic* career demonstrating more sustained dedication than we find in the lives of many of the canonical men. While we may not agree with their sense of the "hierarchy" of their subjects or even of their poetic forms, we can discern the conception of these hierarchies and their striving toward excellence in them.

Even a few thoroughly masculinist critics have recognized agency and career, as Bonamy Dobrée did of Finch, who "experimented as an addict, and wrote with the concentration of an artist."[91] In addition to the statements within poems such as Mary Whateley Darwall's *The Power of Destiny* (1764), women left other evidence. Four years before her death, Mary Wortley Montagu described herself as "haunted . . . by the Daemon Poesie" (H&G, 171). Charlotte Smith wrote in *April* (1797) that as a child she "with artless transport loving, / Sung like the birds, unheeded and untaught." Mary Robinson pledged her commitment to Poetry in *To the Muse of Poetry* (1791):

> I SWEAR; — Oh, Ye, whose souls like mine
> Beam with poetic rays divine
> . . . . . .
> Ne'er will I quit thy burning eye,
> 'Till my last, eager, gasping sigh,
> Shall, from its earthly mansion flown,
> Embrace thee on thy starry Throne.
>
> (Pascoe, 109)

The word *career* suggests continuous engagement with subjects and technical strategies, and traditional canon makers have agreed with José Ortega y Gasset that literature is important when it deals with "the profoundest problems of

humanity, and on account of its own significance as a human pursuit from which the species derived its justification and dignity."[92] Chudleigh's poetry has been characterized as "a continuous philosophical exploration of human passions and the ways to live a truly harmonious life, at peace with one's passions" (Ezell, xxiii), and it was so because of a network of friendships. The most intriguing aspect is the way that women used poetry to find themselves within a philosophy of life, and over the course of their writing lives their poetry became a fascinating kind of life-writing. The honesty and the craftsmanship of these poems, combined with their subject, indicate that women do take on "what existence is."[93]

Agency may be assessed in proportion to perceived ambition, and women's statements of aspiration often pass unnoticed and yet they permeate their poetry. There is a hungering in the women poets for *beautiful* poetry, for technical and aesthetic achievement, for the creation of a sound that enhances and deepens content. For example, whenever they praise classical or earlier English poets, they give more attention to style than to anything else. Perhaps the most accessible acknowledgments of ambition are in statements about other poets. Before Pope, John Denham and Edmund Waller are often cited as the poles of achievement, Denham for "correctness" and "fire" and Waller for his "refinement" and musicality. Brereton, for example, refers to Waller as "so fam'd for tuneful Lays" and laments her own "harsh numbers."[94] Credited with the perfect combination of "sweetness and poetic fire," Sappho is a standard in many original poems, as she is in Mary Leapor's *Hymn to Morning* (1748):

> Thus from *Mira* to her Lyre,
> Till the idle Numbers tire:
> Ah! *Sappho* sweeter sings, I cry,
> And the spiteful Rocks reply,
> (Responsive to the jarring Strings)
> Sweeter — *Sappho* sweeter sings.[95]

Poets with agency also have self-definition, an identity they have developed, discovered, claimed, and are willing to display. Mary Robinson's *Ode to the Muse* (1791) is a good example. It opens with a verse that surveys the moods and purposes of poetry in sixteen tight lines:

> O, let me seize thy pen sublime
> That paints, in melting dulcet rhyme,
> The glowing pow'r, the magic art,
> Th' extatic raptures of the Heart;

Soft Beauty's timid smile serene,
The dimples of Love's sportive mien;
The sweet descriptive tale to trace;
To picture Nature's winning grace;
To steal the tear from Pity's eye;
To catch the sympathetic sigh;
O teach me, with swift light'nings force
To watch wild passion's varying course;
To mark th' enthusiast's vivid fire,
Or calmly touch thy golden lyre,
While gentle Reason mildly sings
Responsive to the trembling strings.
(Pascoe, 76)

This self-definition is often expressed in these relational passages, and it enables the recognition of such canon-making, agency-awarding "signature" work. Like gender, the part that the awarding of agency—whether it be recognized, perceived, or created—plays in the assignment of literary value and in the formation of the canon must be problematized and newly theorized.

Certainly we need to critique categories and literary periods and test their adequacy. As Pamela Plimpton has written, sometimes these women's "texts fit neither the periods, nor the genres, nor the theoretical perspectives we are trained to respect," and they often "use poetic strategies that expose the criteria by which aesthetic judgments are made."[96] Isobel Armstrong continues, "We have had two hundred years to discover a discourse of and strategies for reading male poets. They belong to a debate, a dialectic; we know how to think about politics, epistemology, power, and language, in productive ways that . . . make these poets *mean* for us. A hermeneutics has evolved. Not so with the female poets. We are discovering who they are, but there are few ways of talking about them."[97] Literature is a record of and a call to our humanity, and it has always provided humankind with beauty, intellectual stimulation, pleasure, and inspiration. It consoles and inspires us, makes us laugh and urges us to care for the victimized. We can never have enough good literature, and the exclusion of Anne Finch's *Nocturnal Reverie*, Elizabeth Rowe's Canticles, Lady Mary's *Epistle from Mrs. Yonge*, Elizabeth Carter's *To* —— ("Come dear *Emilia*, and enjoy / Reflexion's fav'rite Hour"), Charlotte Smith's *Written at Penshurst, in autumn 1788*, and even the hilarious, witty *Disaster* by Mary Savage leaves us all the poorer.

CHAPTER TWO

Anne Finch and What Women Wrote

> To whom English verse is under greater obligation
> than are likely to be either acknowledged or remembered.
> — WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Although earning the right to be identified as a poet is something like becoming recognized as a novelist or a playwright, writing poetry is not like writing a novel or a play—not now and especially not in the eighteenth century. Poetry has always been associated with the expression of individual feeling, often strong and personal feeling. In the eighteenth century it was sacred ground—the field on which the nation's claim to artistic equality with the Greeks, the Romans, and the French would be contested. Poetry was also written to participate in the most serious social and political debates and to express, and therefore propagate and teach, philosophical arguments. Additionally, writing extempore poetry was a fashionable social activity that captured transitory feelings and shared, ordinary events. Thus, writing poetry could seem both accessible and impossible. Although it has seldom been remarked upon, possessors of special talents usually produce both pieces in the most respected verse forms that show the highest ambition and polish and also pieces in ragged rhythm that are whipped off to express a transitory idea to amuse others or themselves. Because the eighteenth century was a time of widespread public appreciation of and active practice in writing poetry, more of every kind of poetry found its way into print and enriches the landscape.

Today poetry, when thought of at all, is still crowned, as it has been from the beginning of literary history, "the highest form of human expression."[1] The esteem and importance of poetry is everywhere recorded. As the call for world superiority in "arts and arms" echoed in Great Britain, writers referred to poetry as "the language of the gods," and Joseph Addison even demanded the scrutiny of poetry on tombstones. In narrating the life of one of the many women writers who surrendered some of her poetic ambitions, Stuart Curran writes, "Though she soon saw that the means to financial independence lay in prose, [Charlotte] Smith's sense of her genteel heritage and *her claims to artistry* never allowed her to abandon a commitment to poetry"(Curran, xxii–xxiii, emphasis mine).

In this chapter I begin to sketch a landscape broad and detailed enough to include women and, in a variety of ways, to answer the question, What did women write? In the first section I sketch some of the most influential aspects of their milieu, including the male poets they admired, and in the second I focus on the popular rather than the most canonical forms of poetry, specifically occasional poems, fables, pastoral dialogues, and theater verse. Finch becomes a centerpiece, for she represents the possibility of a life as a poet for a women in the first quarter of the century and what such a vocation or career might look like. In the third section I extend my exploration of the conception of a career through poems on poetry. The work of the women featured in this chapter—Mary Savage, Mary Chudleigh, Anne Finch, Sarah Fyge Egerton—undermines the familiar "hoary" "assumptions and prejudices" about women poets: that they lack high ambition, put emotion before form, "are likely to be indifferent technicians," and "imitate closely the poetic productions of men."[2] In the final section, I focus on Finch's poem *The Spleen*, one of the favorite and most reprinted poems by an eighteenth-century woman, in order to extend understanding of the world in which these women were writing and the legacy they believed they were leaving. Because this poem is a Pindaric ode, perhaps the most frequently written form in the century but also one of the most canonical, and both personal, like many of the poems discussed in this chapter, and topical, like those in the next, it is a suitable transition to chapter three.

The Social and the Formal

Of all literary forms, poetry was the most respectable for women to write. They wrote for their private amusement, and cultured women were expected to be able to write a polished verse, just as they were expected to dance and sketch. What Jean Mallinson says of Anne Finch could be said of dozens of other women: "Out of the

constraints of being a gentlewoman, [she] wrote many occasional poems elaborating the courtesies of friendship, hospitality, marriage, mourning, anniversaries, and the like, weaving through poems the network of observance and exchange which women were then, as they are now, expected to sustain."[3] One of the signs that Julia, the heroine of Helen Maria Williams's novel by the same name, is exemplary is that she composes poetry. By page 15 we know that "from an early age" Julia had a "particular sensibility" for poetry, and her *Address to Poetry* reveals her taste, her knowledge of literature, and her ability to write a graceful ode. Biographies written today acknowledge this fact, as they represent poetry writing as cultured, feminine behavior in statements such as, "Lady Melbourne could read French and compose poetry on occasion."[4] Although we can assume that only the best of these, and only after revision, found their way into print, *vers de société* such as Charlotte Lennox's *Verses wrote extempore on a Gentleman's playing on the Flute* and Mary Masters's *On a Gnat flying about a Candle* are typical.

Charlotte Smith, like many other poets, makes precise distinctions about extempore poems. She explains that the verses of *An Evening Walk by the Sea* in *Conversations Introducing Poetry* are "not entirely" extempore, "for they cost me near an hour, but they are on a simple subject, and one with which I am well acquainted. On a subject more abstruse, I should not compose with equal facility."[5] Several such poems by Finch are in the *Wellesley Manuscript Poems;* in *To a Lady who having desired me to compose something upon the foregoing subject* (the death of Lord March's sparrow) she emphasizes the "ready talents" needed for extemporaneous composition and what the experience was often like: "Even Prior . . . / . . . / Perhaps like me had he been set / Had not much more about him" (*Wellesley*, 78). Others found the form more congenial; among several such poems by Mary Whateley Darwall is *Impromptu. On being requested to write some verses.* A fine example of a graceful poem on a fashionable topic, it begins, "By the softly-murm'ring stream, / Where I fondly us'd to dream." She describes herself as "oft befriended / By the muse, who then attended / Ev'ry rural haunt I sought."[6] Even the most serious subjects are found in such poems, as Ann Murry's *A Sacred Invocation, written extempore* illustrates.

The upper classes' way of dashing off poetry to comply with a friend's request or to commemorate almost any occasion no matter how mundane or domestic, to display wit or the ability to write in a fashionable mode, or to be an "amiable and amusing" acquaintance gradually spread, and being able to write extempore and fashionable verse became an important part of the process of gentrification. Most of the century's collections of poetry include at least a few examples, and social

gatherings that included word games, charades, and music included a variety of poetry-writing entertainments. Harriet and Emma in Jane Austen's novel make a collection of riddles, most in verse, as is Mr. Woodhouse's "Kitty, a fair but frozen maid." Emma remarks that it is by David Garrick, and the narrator observes wryly, "In this age of literature, such collections on a very grand scale are not uncommon."[7] Anne, Lady Miller, held poetry gatherings at her home in Batheaston, during which guests put short poems on timely subjects in an urn. They competed for prizes, and she published four volumes of them as *Poetical Amusements at a Villa near Bath* (1775–81). Mary Savage's *On the Use—Abuse of Poetry. The Critic, and the Sylph of the Vase, At Bath-Easton* contrasts the sour critic to the charming, buoyant Miller:

> If I chose to write—says a Critic; in spleen,
> I would quickly decide, this poetical theme;
> And prove it as clear, as the light to your eyes,
> That poetry, serves as a shelter for lies.
> If a hero they paint, he is prais'd to the sky,
> And a God or a Goddess his wants must supply;
> If they beauty describe; I defy you to know,
> The face; by the picture they set out to show.

Miller, "the Sylph of the Vase," answers with an affirmation of the pleasures and uses of poetry:

> Cease, cease then to rave, nor an art strive to blast,
> Which like truth, love, and time must for evermore last.
> Reply'd the Sylph—(who bending o'er the vase,
> Upholds the mirtle wreath, which crowns applause.)
> While there's a heart that friendship's pow'r can feel;
> While there's a heart, inspir'd by heavenly zeal;
> While tender lovers, fear to speak their woe,
> While blushing fair ones fear true love to show;
> While truth sublime, shall o'er the mind prevail;
> While wit shall flourish, and while beauty's frail;
> While lays, poetic, from this vase resound,
> By genius prompted, and by *Miller* crown'd;
> So long shall every tender feeling breast,
> That can by joy be rais'd or grief opprest,

> Confess the bliss, poetick lays inspire,
> And sing the praises of *Apollo*'s lyre.[8]

This poem is a variant on the traditional antagonistic dialogue between poet and critic. By uniting poet and the muse-patron Miller, Savage overwhelms the critic with joy and female fellowship.

A place to express themselves in a time when outspokenness and even close female friendships were regarded with suspicion and often forbidden, perhaps especially in occasional verse like this, women's poetry records their ambivalences, their aspirations, their experiences, and their participation in the artistic, political, and civic life of their time—each individual's "truth sublime." Savage's is but one of innumerable expressions of the appreciation women have for poetry and their longing to be poets. Germaine Greer observes somewhat acidly that "in large measure it is women who have deified the poet; it was women who fainted when Byron came into a room, who looked for signs of superhumanity in the brow of Wordsworth and grieved over the world-woe engraved in Tennyson's cheeks."[9] Certainly the amount of poetry written by eighteenth-century women shows their love for it. In line after line of "While there's" Savage lists all the subjects that will always inspire poetry and in this happy poem says that poetry "like truth, love, and time must forevermore last."

The general opinion is that classical models dominate serious eighteenth-century poetry and that "the great and characteristic poetry . . . is the poetry of wit, satire, discussion, moral reflection and social comment."[10] The epic, the Horatian epistle, the philosophical verse essay, the eclogue, and the Pindaric ode are difficult forms—indeed, although the greatest male poets attempted them, all failed at the epic and few succeeded with more than one of the other forms. Allusive, dense, and often the products of leisure and professional commitment, this kind of poetry by men attracted professional critics who were even more educated than the poets. Equally characteristic of the century are the forms that English poets rapidly established—ballads, epigrams, "songs" (a category that includes everything from theatrical songs in the style of Thomas D'Urfey to a wide variety of lyric verse), and English forms of the ode, the epistle, and the elegy that were soon accused of being lamentably easy to write in comparison with their classical predecessors.

In many ways, writing women and writing men are more alike than they are different. The poetry of eighteenth-century women reveals a consistent longing for and appreciation of classical writers and a willingness to attempt the most

respected traditional verse forms. As Pamela Plimpton has said, "Most . . . realized . . . that in order for their poetry to be recognized as poetry and enter into the aesthetic standard of the day, it needed to conform to certain expected conventions—to the poetics practiced by society's eminent poets. A woman poet may in fact want very much to prove her command of craft within the masculinist tradition she sees herself writing in."[11] Their poetry also testifies to their understanding and mastery of adapted, new, and fashionable forms. Sometimes women were leaders in popularizing a form, as Anne Finch did the fable and Charlotte Smith, the sonnet. Sometimes women's poetry contributed greatly to the establishment of a specifically English form of a classical or Continental Renaissance form. Sometimes a woman's poem in a well-established form rises magisterially out of a mountain of similar and discouraging dreck, as do, for example, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Verses Written in the Chiosk of the British Palace, at Pera* and Joanna Baillie's *London*. Both are Horatian poems employing the extensive perspective of Samuel Johnson's famous *Vanity of Human Wishes*, and both are masterfully constructed, gracefully written, and distinctively marked by their original perspective and expression.

The women poets of the first decades of the century strongly show the influence of serious Augustan poetry, represented to them by Abraham Cowley, Aphra Behn, John Dryden, and Joseph Addison, on the one hand, and by Matthew Prior and Thomas D'Urfey, on the other. In 1724 Elizabeth Tollet's *Triumvirate of Poets* consists of Addison (England's Virgil), Matthew Prior (its Horace), and Alexander Pope.[12] As Reuben Brower wrote in an influential article on Anne Finch, the "typically Augustan qualities" were "characteristic neatness and plainness of verse structure, the social and aristocratic tone, the religious solemnity and high morality, and the inevitable fondness for the satirical attitude."[13] Widely-read and serious students of poetry, these women largely accepted these values, but their responses to individual poets can be surprising.

Addison's appeal may be hard for us to see today. Except for *The Campaign* and *The Spacious Firmament on High*, Addison's poetry is almost entirely forgotten. In *The Progress of Poetry* (1721) Judith Madan also awarded Addison the distinction of being the English Virgil. In *A True Tale* Mary Barber gives some idea of his eighteenth-century stature as she describes a mother educating her children:

> A Mother, who vast Pleasure finds
> In modelling her Childrens Minds;
> With whom, in exquisite Delight,

She passes many a Winter Night;
. . . . . .
In simple Tales, beside the Fire,
The noblest Notions would inspire:
Her Children, conscious of her Care,
Transported, hung around her Chair,

Of Scripture Heroes she would tell,
Whose Names they lisp'd, ere they cou'd spell:
. . . . . .

At other Times, her Themes would be
The Sages of Antiquity:
Who left immortal Names behind,
By proving Blessings to their Kind.
Again, she takes another Scope,
And tells of ADDISON and POPE.[14]

Jane Brereton agrees, writing that Addison "conveys / Immortal Verse to future Days."[15] Her *Epistle to Sir Richard Steele; on the Death of Mr Addison* chides Steele for not writing a funeral poem for Addison and is the fullest statement of how women saw Addison's poetry. She admires both his neoclassicism and his subjects:

But he the Stagyrite's strict Axioms knew,
And still to Nature, as to Art was true.
He touch'd the Heart, the Passions could command,
'Twas nature all, but mended by his Hand.
Sublime his Style, his Sentiments refin'd,
Full of Benevolence to all Mankind.
In more than Theory he Religion knew,
And kept the Heav'nly Goddess still in view;
Rapt on her Wings, his Soul extatick soars,
Leaves our dull Orb, a better World explores,
And now he 'as reach'd the Etherial Plains above,
Th' eternal Seat of Harmony and Love.[16]

The virtues that Addison often celebrated appealed to women, and Barber agrees with *The Campaign* in *A Tale*, and Brereton includes a tribute to his play *Cato* in *An Epistle*. The control and grace of his verse, as well as his seriousness and restraint of emotion, seemed for a time the epitome of Augustanism.

Although the high opinion of Addison faded, the appeal of Prior was long lasting. Jane Austen could use an unglossed reference to his *Henry and Emma* (1709) in *Persuasion* (1818) to delineate Anne Elliot's feelings about Louisa Musgrove and Wentworth.[17] The women poets praise his tone and musicality, as does "a Lady Unknown," perhaps Anne Finch, in a poem acknowledging her debt to him: "None read Thy verse, or hear Thee speak in vain. / Thy melting Numbers, and polite Address, . . ."[18] Educated as we are on anthologies that represent Prior with *A True Maid*, *For His Own Epitaph*, and *A Better Answer* ("So when I am weary'd with wand'ring all Day; / To Thee my Delight in the Evening I come"), such praise seems unaccountable.[19] Phrases such as "polite Address" and the fact that women seem to have especially liked some of his writing about women reminds us of the number and variety of poems he wrote. Anna Seward gave Prior some of the credit for her best-selling *Louisa*, which, she explained, "resulted from an idea of its being possible to unite the impassioned fondness of Pope's Eloisa with the chaster tenderness of Prior's Emma."[20] Mary Masters, for example, wished she had his skill to praise "Calista," probably Catharine Trotter Cockburn:

> Centred in her the brightest Graces meet,
> Treasures of Knowledge and rich Mines of Wit.
> Her Thoughts are beautiful, refin'd and new,
> Polish'd her Language, and her Judgment true.
> . . . . . .
> Were I enrich'd with Prior's Golden Vein,
> Her would I sing in an exalted Strain;
> Her Merit in the noblest Verse proclaim,
> And raise my own upon CALISTA's Fame.[21]

Jane Brereton writes, "For ever blest be *Prior*'s Shade!" in the light, witty poem *A Query. Occasioned by Reading Prior's Alma. To One that loves good Eating.* In *Alma* Prior proposed replacing the competing philosophical systems that placed the seat of the soul in different places with his own system.[22] In his, the mind moves from the feet to the head as the person ages, and a great deal of time is spent discussing the waist and stomach (the persona's adversary, for instance, proposes the stomach as the true seat of the mind). Brereton is obviously amused by the poem. She flatteringly compares Prior's narrative to "Tales of *Long Meg*, or *Tom Thumb*," thereby suggesting that it will enter British folklore. Her own poem is a Shandyean resolution to the debate between Prior's disputants. She posits "That *Alma*'s Bent, or Inclination, / Is influenc'd by her Situation":

When *Orpheus* touches his Bass-viol,
(These Truths admit of no Denial.)
Soon as th' harmonious Sounds we hear,
Alma is charm'd up to the Ear;
When we partake the rich Repast,
Then *Alma* dwells upon the Taste. . . .[23]

In spite of Prior's reputation for being risqué and cavalier about love, women like Brereton preserved another image of him. "Gay *Prior*, fam'd for jocund Song, / Lov'd to amuse the Fair and Young, / Then wonder not, his Lays appear / To wish my Friend a happy Year," she wrote in *To Mrs. Mary Hale; Jan. 1, 1729. With Prior's Poems.*

Prior's choice of subjects, his lack of sentimentality, and his acute, witty insights into human nature and behavior appealed to women, who often shared his deconstructive perspective. As Linda Merians once said to me, women recognized that he often gave the women figures in his poems funny and slightly subversive views of the world.[24] Addison described Prior's language as "plain and intelligible," and his experimentation with quatrains contributed significantly to the ascendency of that verse form. Prior could be colloquial without being low, and he may have been the first English poet to have a genuine command of the familiar style. Prior's songs, tales, and light satiric verse were most influential, but even *Solomon on the Vanity of the World* (pub. 1718) attracted admirers and imitators, as Elizabeth Rowe's *To Mr. Prior. On his "Solomon"* and an unbroken line of poetic, narrativized stories from the Bible in his style by male and female poets show. Several of these were embraced, much reprinted, and translated. Among them was Rowe's *The History of Joseph. A Poem* (1736, enl. 1737), a fascinating blend of popular poetic and fictional genres that makes the story dramatic and in places even sensational. Hannah More also admired *Solomon*, and her *Sacred Dramas* (1782) is somewhat indebted to it.

Of course Pope's poetry came to be "the quintessence of the high literary mode to which their writing must achieve some relation in order to be considered 'literary.' "[25] As Johnson encapsulated for his age, "Let us look round upon the present time, and back upon the past; let us enquire to whom the voice of mankind has decreed the wreath of poetry; let their productions be examined and their claims stated, and . . . Pope will be no more disputed."[26] Women poets early recognized the standard he set and the meaning of his life and writing. For example, Mary Masters wrote:

> O happy POPE, blest with auspicious Fate!
> On whom the *Muses* and the *Graces* wait,
> Who never o'er the Silver Quill did bow,
> But Floods of Harmony were sure to flow.
> Would thy vast Genius lend me half its Fire,
> And one short Hour my panting Breast inspire;
> By just Degrees the stately Verse should grow,
> And with strong Sense the strong Expression glow.[27]

It has been said that Pope was incapable of writing an ugly line, and his precise, honed verse in the most respected classical forms did set a new standard of craftsmanship. Long after Pope's death, women returned to the voices and shapes of his poetry, as Mary Jones, Elizabeth Hands, Mary Leapor, and Ann Yearsley did. At the end of the century Rebecca Manners encapsulated his standard:

> Melody beyond compeer,
> Quick intelligence of mind,
> Reason strong, and thought refin'd,
> All that genius, all that art
> Can of magic force impart,
> Varied beauties to display,
> Meet in Pope's enchanting lay.[28]

"Progress" poems like this one and Judith Madan's are important guides to contemporary taste and to the process of canonization.[29] They were popular with men and women throughout the century. For some reason, they were often composed early in poets' careers, as was Addison's *Account of the Greatest English Poets* (1694), and they usually carried strong patriotic undertones. Manners, for instance, praises her country, as Thomson had in *Liberty*, as the most hospitable for writing.

Both men and women followed current fashions, and some fads leave us bewildered or even impatient today. Hannah Cowley, Helen Maria Williams, Charlotte Smith, and their male contemporaries left fashionably long, narrative poems with ancient, exotic settings that are nearly unreadable today and impossible to anthologize.[30] Ahead of their time, they laid the groundwork for the important Romantic metrical tales, but their contributions may never be known. Roger Lonsdale has speculated that the use of "styles that were being replaced by new fashions" worked against the popularity and contemporary reputations of

women poets (Lonsdale, xxv). He gives as examples Anne Finch, Mary Jones, and Mary Leapor, but it is important to remember that some male poets did the same without adverse effects. Alexander Pope is a notable example, as he clung to the heroic couplet in a time when his contemporaries were writing quatrains and irregular odes, and today a case might be made that those who clung to Spenser, Milton, Waller, and Pope have suffered less erasure than those seduced by D'Urfey, Prior, Young, and Shenstone. In fact, almost no one has taken serious notice of the lingering influences of these poets, especially the latter group, on women,[31] and we can never forget that every age has innovators *and* also those who continue and carry forward existing forms.

Lonsdale lists many of the fads as he describes the coverage of his *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets:*

> It may perhaps be a boast of the present anthology that it underrepresents the insipidity of the fashionable poetry of this period, the many eastern pastorals, legendary tales . . . , imitations of Ossian, laments for dead birds and small animals, and all the odes to Fancy, Sensibility, Pity, and other personifications which proliferated and which teenagers were finding it all too easy to mimic. (xxxvi)

As Lonsdale implies, whatever women were doing, more men were doing it just as badly. Collections of poetry included plenty of ludicrous offerings by men, such as Moses Mendez's *On the Death of a Lady's Owl*, to which he thoughtfully appended a poetic epitaph.[32] If women seldom wrote to and about children as well as Matthew Prior, the same was true for men, as Ambrose Philips illustrates. And there may be no better "lament for a dead bird" than Mary Savage's *The Disaster*, with its specific, individualized, happy description of her sparrows and the extravagant spinning out of imagined punishments for the cat who dined on one of the birds:

> But, caitiff vile, live thou disgraced,
> Nor ever more of sparrow taste;
> Thy share of toast and cream shall fail,
> Nor e'er in mirth pursue thy tail.
> No tender mouse shall grace thy dish,
> Nor shalt thou ever taste of fish;
> At dreary eve of winter's day,
> Warm by the fire each cat shall lay,
> Whilst thou, shut out, shall mew in vain,

Exposed to storms of wind and rain;
Through pools of wet be forced to tramp,
Thy limbs benumbed with painful cramp.

No more warming by the fire, no more fish and other treats—the threats rise ominously to the one before forgiveness: "Firm in my hand I held her still, / To show I had the power to kill."[33]

Anne Finch and Popular Poetry

Contemporaneous with Addison, Prior, Pope, Dryden, Behn, William Congreve, Samuel Garth, Thomas Parnell, and John Gay, Anne Kingsmill Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, was a poet of astonishing range and versatility. It is hard to find a poetic form in which she did not write, and she personifies the answer, everything that men were, to the question, what were women writing? She has long been reputed to be the best woman poet of the century, and that she lived the life of a career poet is irrefutable. Best known for the poems Wordsworth singled out (and cut freely in his *Poems and Extracts*) and especially for *The Nocturnal Reverie*, Finch is often the only woman included in overviews of the century's poetry. Nevertheless, only a few of her poems, in an extremely limited number of styles, are recognized, and her career is seldom contextualized. Charles Hinnant, author of the only critical book devoted to her alone, points out that there is a "fundamentally narrow view" of her poetry, "that the classic subject of Finch's verse is retirement—but a retirement that has very little to do with politics, culture, or even religion." He argues that her "poems have never been given their just due" and speculates that it is because they are difficult to reconcile "with the Dryden-and-Pope-centered conception of Augustan poetry that has served as the working model for academic canon formation for the past seventy-five years." Nor does she fit into the Butler-Rochester-Swift line that he says has been established in the last twenty years.[34] Perhaps that is why she is such a comprehensive guide to the poetry of her period and an introduction to what *women* poets were doing.

As would be expected for a poet of her social position, Finch wrote a great many short, fashionable lyrics, especially early in her career. There were eighteen in her *Miscellany Poems, Written by a Lady* (1713), and many others in a pleasing variety of tones and verse forms are now available in *The Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea* and *The Anne Finch Wellesley Manuscript Poems.* Some of her lyrics are

delightful, quick observations, such as *Upon Lady Selena Shirly's picture drawn by Mr. Dagar;* some are Petrarchan, such as *Love, thou art best of Human Joys;* others are conventional love lyrics (*By Love persu'd, In vain I fly,* for instance); and still others, such as *A Song upon a Punch Bowl,* are intelligent social commentary. In tone and form her lyrics look both forward and back.[35] Many have a gentle melancholy arising from a rather Renaissance conception of the world as a place of difficulty and even grief. In *Hope* she writes, "*Hope* is the growth of Earth, the only Plant, / Which either Heav'n, or Paradice cou'd want." *A Song on Greife* [*sic*] describes grief as attending almost every moment in life. This mood is common in her time, as the ubiquity of lines such as these from Mary Chudleigh's *The Observation* attest: "No State of Life's from Troubles free, / Grief mixes with our vital Breath." Such poems are balanced by witty, light-hearted, topical social comment, and Finch's striking, dramatic imagination marks these short, often trivial poems just as it does her other work. *Adam Pos'd* begins, "Cou'd our First Father, at his toilsome Plough" have seen a modern woman "In all her Airs . . . / Her various Fashions," and concludes that he would have been "posed," puzzled, as to what kind of creature she was and, therefore, unable to give her a name. Here and elsewhere she adeptly solves the problem of how women might appropriately write satire. Aiming at women as well as men, carefully controlling the tone and form, and playing the role of social reformer, she sets a useful example for later women poets.

Finch's *A Sigh* is a beautiful and subtle poem along these same lines, one that apparently effortlessly limns women's simultaneous awareness of the external and internal worlds:

> Gentlest Air thou breath of Lovers
> Vapour from a secret fire
> Which by thee itts self discovers
> E're yett daring to aspire
>
> Softest Noat of whisper'd anguish
> Harmony's refindest part
> Striking whilst thou seem'st to languish
> Full upon the list'ners heart.
>
> Safest Messenger of Passion
> Stealing through a crou'd of spys
> Which contrain the outward fassion
> Close the Lips and guard the Eyes.

Shapelesse Sigh we ne're can show thee
Form'd but to assault the Ear
Yett e're to their cost they know thee
Ev'ry Nymph may read thee here.
(Reynolds, 138)

What is so fascinating here is the interweaving of the most common Restoration performative attitudes toward love (distrust, danger, resistance) with an awareness of a genuine and honest self. The "Gentlest Air" from a "secret fire" is the "breath of Lovers," with all of the resonance of Renaissance meanings of *breath* as life, spirit, and being. In this verse, the sigh makes the lover aware of his or her feelings, and in the second it is the "Softest Noat" that miraculously communicates with the beloved. Like a single but strong and beautiful note from a musical instrument, "Striking whilst thou seem'st to languish, / Full upon the list'ners heart," the sigh is described in a verse with a single powerful metaphor. The third verse might be describing a scene in a Restoration comedy or from Finch's days at court: "Stealing through a crou'd of spys." Although the thought is utterly conventional, the economy and precision of her line "Close the Lips and guard the Eyes" within the setting and the transition to final lines that bring together public and private display a mastery found in few other poets of the century. "Yett e're to their cost they know thee"—love is indeed a danger to women, as the poems, novels, and even conduct books contended—"Ev'ry Nymph may read thee here." The final image, then, is one of the nymph understanding the message accurately.

Written in trochaic tetrameter, the poem uses the opening syllables of many lines for emphasis. As Finch so often does, she sets up two perspectives quickly, with "Gentlest" and "Vapour" and with "Softest" and "Harmony" in the first two verses. In the third she captures the tension between trust and danger with "Safest" and "Stealing" and heightens the tension with "Shapelesse Sigh" "*Form'd*," an apparent contradiction that takes the poem from its internal, private space to the external world of observation and irresolution. The familiar sign language of love, then, does communicate, but whether a gesture is an escaped revelation or a calculated assault is unknowable. The effervescence of the sigh dissolves as "we ne're can show thee / Form'd but to assault the Ear." Not only does language fail but the speaker cannot avoid admitting the possibility that the sigh has been performed, not escaped spontaneously. The symmetry within verses and the movement of the poem are a brilliantly original summary of the jousting in the greatest scenes between such characters as Harriet and Dorimant

in *The Man of Mode* and Millamant and Mirabell in *The Way of the World.* But the overall impression is not of ambiguity and danger but of the effervescent magic, the ephemeral nature of the beautiful sigh, as each verse's beginning creates this impression ("Gentlest Air," "Softest Noat," "Safest Messenger") and the final use of alliterative onomatopoeia, "Shapelesse Sigh," reinforces.

A Sigh brings to mind Anne Carson's deceptively simple definition of a lyric poem: "a highly concentrated action in which every letter and syllable counts."[36] It is easy to find every letter and syllable counting in Finch's lyric, but it and many other lyric poems are also "concentrated *actions.*" Just as *A Sigh* puts forth a vividly rendered situation from a woman's multifaceted understanding, other lyrics in an impressive variety of tones can be described accurately as actions through which conventional masculine forms are dramatically reaccentuated. An example is a poem about writing, *A Song. Melinda to Alcander,* which was not included in her 1713 *Miscellany Poems* but is in both of the manuscripts that Myra Reynolds used in collecting her poems:

Witt, as free, and unconfin'd
  As the universal air,
Was not alotted to mankind,
  Leaving us, without our share;
No, we posesse alike that fire,
And all you boast of, we inspire.

Fancy, does from beauty rise,
  Beauty, teatches you to write,
Your flames are borrow'd from our Eyes,
  You but speak, what they endite.
Then cease to boast alone, that Fame.
Witt, and love, we give and claime.

(Reynolds, 128)

The startling, witty ending to the first verse recalls the many poems by women that cast themselves as the equals, the "sisters," of the Muses. In both verses she claims wit for women, first as "that fire" equally given to men and women and then as merely borrowed, derivative in men. The poem is styled a song for a play, and the last line takes a turn expected in the witty couple's heroine: "Witt, and love, we give and claime." This line softens the poem, sliding "witt" back into the dialogue of the jousting lovers as the conventional proof of the suitability of their

union and invoking love, which such lovers finally willingly give but also claim as their expectation and right. The poet, like these heroines, can speak with wit and fire equal to a man's. The second verse goes surprisingly far in claiming the creative inspiration for the woman. Not only is the fire borrowed but the male can speak only what the women's eyes "endite," which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "announce," "dictate," or "proclaim."

Finch's most underappreciated poems are her fables, which make up about one-third of her poetry and half of the poems in *Miscellany Poems* (1713).[37] The fable is one of the forms in which the sustained, culturally engaged experimentation in content, structure, and prosody typical of career poets is obvious. Also, in low-key ways, in the fable Finch violated almost every conventional expectation about the content and opinions in women's poetry. Like lyrics, fables in her time tended to be succinct, paradoxical, and often subversive. Mark Loveridge even notes that the Augustan fable was often "a 'moment' or series of moments, after the manner of lyric, though not itself intrinsically lyrical."[38] Translations of La Fontaine and L'Estrange were enormously popular, and John Ogilby, Behn, Dryden, Swift, Prior, and others wrote fables and translated them. Finch equals them in number and overall quality. The pioneering critic of eighteenth-century women's literature, Myra Reynolds, speaking perhaps of original or "imitated" ones written in English, says that they "show her first in the field with a poetic form destined to great popularity."[39] Charles Hinnant is correct to remind us that the fable "belongs with the irregular Pindaric ode as one of the master texts through which the writers of the time tested their capacities" and that Gay and Swift agreed that poetic fables were exceptionally difficult to compose (Hinnant, 166–67). French neoclassical criticism awarded the fable "all the dignity of a heroic classical form," a tradition continued through John Dennis and Richard Blackmore to Addison and other literary critics.[40] Dryden's were published in 1700 (with more editions in 1713, 1721, 1734, and 1745), Prior's between 1700 and 1720,[41] and Gay's would be published in 1727 (with further editions in 1728 and 1729). Many of Finch's are reworkings of fables by La Fontaine or L'Estrange, whose prose fables were published in 1692 and 1699.[42]

Mark Loveridge has spoken of the "fevered fable-culture of the late 1720s,"[43] and Finch's contributions in her *Miscellany* and in Pope's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1717) prepared the way by expanding the form's participation in the zone of immediate contact with reality—both public and personal. People in her fables are dislodged by war, poverty, and ambition, and she can refer easily to, for instance, the Scots' attempt to establish a settlement on Darien, now Panama (in

The Jester and the Little Fishes). She demonstrated how many things an engaged and experimental writer could do with fables. Most of her fables are so original that the reader simultaneously hears the traces of a line of fables on a story and traces of recent experiences, including such major philosophical movements as that toward a contract theory of marital relations. She made three major contributions. First, she continued a movement now traced to John Ogilby to make fables about English events and structures of feeling;[44] second, she demonstrated how the form can weave writing into the fabric of social life; and third, she moved the fable in an entirely new direction by using it to comment on the situation of women. Her fables are not simple, and they can take sudden turns that challenge modern sensibilities. For example, *The Lord and the Bramble* appears to be about class, and sympathy seems to be building for the banished bramble. The poem opens, "To view his stately Walks and Groves, / A Man of Pow'r and Place / Was hast'ning on"—lines that emphasize the lord's self-absorption. The lord

> Had bid his Gard'ner rid it quite,
> And throw it o'er the Pail.
>
> Often the *Bry'r* had wish'd to speak,
> That this might not be done;
> But from the Abject and the Weak,
> Who no important Figure make,
> What Statesman does not run?
>
> But clinging now about his Waste,
> Ere he had time to fly,
> *My Lord* (quoth he). . . .
> (Reynolds, 185)

In fact, the fable is about writing and the only way to cope with men like the lord:

> *No Wants, no Threatnings, nor the Jail*
> *Will curb an angry Wit:*
> *Then think not to chastise, or rail;*
> *Appease the Man, if you'd prevail,*
> *Who some sharp Satire writ.*
> (186)

To some extent, the fable has always been about power and especially about the brief symbolic moments when the powerless triumph. Finch's fables are no

exception, but her strong opinions about hierarchy and order complicate her tales and, again, move them in original directions. *The Shepherd Piping to the Fishes* begins with a lovely picture of Phillis holding the line and the shepherd piping in order to catch the fish with her beauty and his music. For a few verses the scene is a light-hearted idyll to the sister arts. Then,

> The angry Shepherd in a Pett,
> Gives o'er his wheedling Arts,
> And from his Shoulder throws the Net,
> Resolv'd he wou'd a Supper get
> By Force, if not by Parts.

For a second, this move seems lamentable and a threatening picture of human nature. To today's reader, the final verse is unsettling but an important insight into Finch's philosophy:

> *That stated Laws are always best*
> *To rule the vulgar Throng,*
> *Who grow more Stubborn when Carest,*
> *Or with soft Rhetorick addrest,*
> *If taking Measures wrong.*
> (Reynolds, 174)

The firmness with which Finch identified with the ruling class and with the order that hierarchy provided is consistent throughout her fables. The late *Democritus and His Neighbours* rails at the idea that "The Peoples Voice [is] the Voice Divine," and *Upon an Improbable Undertaking* viciously satirizes those who would try to replace the true English oak, the Stuart line.

Those who have seen her fables as expressions of nostalgia and mourning for the defeated James II and of recognition of her powerless position in forced retirement are not wrong. Many of her fables, like *The Lord and the Bramble*, propose appeasement or retirement in the interest of peace of mind. The theorist of imperialism Ashis Nandy wrote in *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism:* "But the meek inherit the earth not by meekness alone. They have to have categories, concepts, and, even, defences of mind with which to turn the West into a reasonably manageable vector within the traditional world views still outside the span of modern ideas of universalism."[45] Finch extends the world of fable to carnivalize, defamiliarize, and expose "the way of the world," thereby making the fable form not only encompass immediate reality but create catego-

ries and defenses of mind. Among the most important of these is the kind of "higher order cognition" that Nandy describes the ruled developing. "The main threat to the colonizers is bound to become the latent fear that the colonized will reject the consensus and, instead of . . . becoming the counterplayers of the rules according to the established rules, will discover an alternative frame of reference within which the oppressed do not seem weak, degraded and distorted men."[46] That frame of reference for Finch is both self-knowledge and the willingness to reject values and hierarchies even when in possession of them, as the shepherd does. It is notable that it is upon his vindication that he rejects the ruling-class code. In *A Miller, his Son, and their Ass* the miller takes each successive person's advice about appearing in the most prestigious light but finally cries out, "I am an Ass, it is agreed, / And so are all, who wou'd in this succeed. / Hereafter, tho' Reproof or Praise I find, / I'll neither heed, but follow my own Mind" (Reynolds, 158).

Fable's traditional subjects are human nature and relationships, and Finch's are harsh and violent. So familiar a tale as *Jupiter and the Farmer* adds a Treasury that "wanted a Supply" and a Mercury charging rack-rent and concludes with an abject, beaten farmer: "O, *Jupiter!* with Famine pinch'd he cried."[47] As his patient suffers and dies, a quack physician gleefully chants, "For the better" in the fable of that title (166–68). In the viciously ironic *The Executor* the too-eager heir is crushed by his inheritance on the day he gets it. The characters are insatiable, always wanting. Fables such as *The Tradesman and the Scholar* and *Man's Injustice towards Providence* are filled with objects, cornucopias of categories such as japan, china, delft, and English laquerware named in *Man's Injustice towards Providence*.[48] The moral in *The Jester and the Little Fishes* is "A Jest, well tim'd, though from a *worthless* Man / Often obtains, more than true merit can" (Reynolds, 169, emphasis mine). *The Brass-Pot, and Stone-Jugg* begins, "A Brazen *Pot*, by scouring vext, / With Beef and Pudding still perplext, / Resolv'd to' attempt a nobler life." As often as these fables are brightened by her alert punning, they consistently show the unworthy struggling to climb and harming all those around them. It is all too easy for the pot to awaken ambition in the jug. "Yet something [somewhat] mov'd by this fine Story / And frothing higher with Vain-Glory," the jug undertakes the adventure with "The most perfidious of all Kettles," who schemes to smash the jug "by obdurate Thump."

Characters connive and cheat, and the worst are washed in contemporary experience. Finch is well known for her loyalty to the Stuarts, but the fables that critique the implications of the triumph of the Glorious Revolution are largely

overlooked. In tale after tale she describes the shifts in human relationships, the threats to moral codes, and the failures of contracts. The jug's contract with the pot and the wolves' with the shepherds are shams. In the powerful fable *The Owl Describing Her Young Ones* the contract leads to the deaths of the baby birds. In *The Eagle, the Sow, and the Cat* the cat gets rid of the sow and the eagle by trickery in a virtually motiveless takeover of the oak tree that had been their shared home. Both the eagle and the sow had "peaceful" nests, and by the sixth line Finch has laid the ground for her catastrophe: "Thus Palaces are cramm'd from Roof to Ground, / And Animals, as various, in them found" (Reynolds, 198). The cat is the wily courtier, a figure risen from the middle ranks, who rejoices in sowing dissent and practicing "Arts." She tells the eagle, "A Pestilential *Sow*, . . . / On the Foundation has been long at work, / Help'd by a Rabble. . . ." In a grisly turn, both the sow and the eagle abandon their young, and the cat and the eagle eat them. The moral reads, "*Curs'd* Sycophants! *How wretched is the Fate / Of those, who know you not, till 'tis too late!*" (200). Perhaps unpublished because it was such an obvious attack on Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, *Moderation: or the Wolves and the Sheep* has the same moral.[49] The wolves insist, as Harley did, that they adhere to the philosophy of moderation and can be trusted with the sheep. The shepherds and mastiffs, perhaps Godolphin and Marlborough, sleep while the wolves devour the sheep. "Ye' ruin'd fools," the wolves chortle. "A Wolf whatever he appears / Intends but to devour" (*Wellesley*, 83–85). Fables such as these show how immersed she was throughout her life in her changing times.

Over and over, Finch sounds the theme of the dangers of not recognizing the true character of those around you and consequently taking insufficient defensive measures. *The Man Bitten by Fleas* and *The Dog and Master* are complex meditations on this theme, complicated even more by conclusions such as this: "But whether lighter [weapons] had not done as well, / Let their Great-Grandsons, or their Grandsons tell" (Reynolds, 202). One of her most elaborate fables, *The Young Rat and his Dam, the Cock and the Cat*, satirizes those who learn nothing on the grand tour. The rat powders his wig and has learned to take snuff from a nutshell but admires the cat, whose purring "compos'd his gentle mind" and "soft, contracted Paw lay calmly still" (Reynolds, 188). Finch concludes with a verse in the voice of the mother rat that warns her country about foreign enemies:

> Amongst mankind a Thousand *Fops* we see,
> Who in their Rambles learn no more than Thee;
> Cross o'er the *Alpes*, and make the *Tour of France*

> To learn a paltry Song, or antick Dance;
> Bringing their Noddles, and Valizes pack'd
> With Mysteries, from Shops and Taylors wreck'd:
> But what may prejudice their Native Land;
> Whose Troops are raising, or whose Fleet is mann'd,
> Ne'er moves their Thoughts, nor do they understand.
> (Reynolds, 189)

This shapely fable parallels the contemptible, shopping traveler with the stupid rat dazzled by the "coat of fur" on the cat. Although childless, Finch had a great deal to say to young men through fables that can be related to the collections to educate princes. *The Philosopher, the Young Man, and His Statue*, for example, brought the fable's traditional political exposé and pointed observations about human nature into her admonitions. She warns the vain and flattered youth that the statue is "Of no Advantage to the State, / 'Twou'd neither combate, nor debate, / But idly stand alone" and that he should be careful that "He prove not like the stone."

Our culture's most beloved fables draw the reader in and take a turn that allows identification or at least recognition. For example, it is easy to imagine the progression of feelings in *The Fox and the Grapes* and the hare's feeling of rueful amusement at the end of *The Tortoise and the Hare*. Finch often provides only negatives. In *The Battle between the Rats and the Weazels* neither cause is better than the other, and both are unattractive animals. Repeatedly, rather than setting her protagonists apart morally, she draws them together, as she does the vain, deceitful owl and the rapacious eagle.

Just as Finch drew contemporary reality into her fables, she marked them with some of the most distinctive elements of contemporary poetry. Many of her fables have the doubling and balance of a Palladian house. In *The King and the Shepherd* the king raises a wise, skillful shepherd to the post of Lord Keeper. A hermit tells the tale of a blind man who finds a serpent on a bank, mistakes it for a staff, refuses to listen to warnings, and is bitten. "Thus wilt thou find, *Shepherd* believe it true, / Some Ill, that shall this seeming Good ensue," the poet writes; "So prov'd the Event." The shepherd is accused of graft, and his chests are searched. In *Mercury and the Elephant* the elephant's story is told in some detail and then balanced by the writer's situation.

The poetry of Pope is filled with voices, and Finch anticipates this characteristic. Her ability to sketch a distinctive voice colored in just the right places by her sense of humor is one of her greatest talents. The first line of *The Atheist and the*

Acorn creates a conceited atheist lying under an oak tree musing, "Methinks this World is oddly made, / And ev'ry thing amiss" (Reynolds, 169). His first amendment would be to have large "fruits," specifically pumpkins, grow on trees, with small ones, specifically acorns, on the ground. The selection of *pumpkin*, a word rather funny in itself and a vegetable ridiculous to imagine on a tree, tells us just what kind of brain the atheist has. Pop! an acorn falls right into his eye (170). With a voice full of itself and paced to sound reflective, the poem laughs at the silly man whose eye waters prolifically. Sometimes the quick creation of individual voices and personalities surprises. In the highly narrative *King and the Shepherd* the search of the chest discovers only the shepherd's hook and bagpipe. At sight of them, he remembers and decides to return to his former life. The king's voice is that of the Horatian interlocutor: "How's this! the Monarch something mov'd rejoins. / . . . / What made thee leave a Life so fondly priz'd, / To be in Crouds, or envy'd, or despis'd?" (Reynolds, 164). The voices, including the poet's, can be as pithy and epigrammatic as those of Pope and Thomas Gray. "There's no To-Morrow to a Willing Mind" the fable *There's No To-Morrow*, with its increasingly broad illustrations, ends.

Finch demonstrated that the fable was an acceptable and useful form for women poets, and many used it for the kinds of acute philosophical and political commentary that she did. Finch did more, however. She expanded the range and made the form a place for pointed comments about the situation of women. For example, *The Owl Describing Her Young Ones* can also be read as a horrifying allegory of contemporary marriage practices. The owl presents her babies as stylish heiresses and makes a contract, much like a marriage contract, with an eagle.

> But I ne'er let them take the Air,
> The Fortune-hunters do so stare;
> And Heiresses indeed they are.
>
> This ancient Yew three hundred Years,
> Has been possess'd by Lineal Heirs:
> The Males extinct, now All is Theirs.
>
> I hope I've done their Beauties right,
> Whose Eyes outshine the Stars by Night;
> Their Muffs and Tippets too are White.
>
> (Reynolds, 179)

Like the parents marketing their daughters, the owl considers their fortunes and inheritances to be their most prominent "beauties." They are turned over to the

eagle's protection *and possession;* the latter is made very clear. One night the eagle returns hungry, takes a sharp look at "the living Flesh," and asks,

> What are these Things, and of what Sex,
> At length he cry'd, with Vultur's Becks,
> And Shoulders higher than their Necks?
>
> These wear no *Palatines*, nor Muffs,
> *Italian* Silks, or *Doyley* Stuffs,
> But motley Callicoes, and Ruffs.
>
> (180)

They are, of course, but female owls, and the eagle strips away their pretension to equality of class. Then he devours them and blames the owl:

> Were then your Progeny but Owls?
>
> I thought some *Phoenix* was their Sire,
> Who did those charming Looks inspire,
> That you'd prepar'd me to admire.
>
> Upon your self the Blame be laid;
> My Talons you've to Blood betray'd,
> And ly'd in every Word you said.
>
> (181)

Finch dramatizes the inordinate praise and misrepresentation of progeny, as well as the rapacious assumption of class privilege common in her society. The fables like this one allow Finch a poetic voice free of gender self-consciousness, as the stark, blunt words and hammering rhythm of the final line illustrate.

In a few other tales the adversaries are male and female, and the fables charged with gender politics. The eagle ends the marriage scheming that is somewhat reminiscent of Jane Austen's Mrs. Bennett, but in *The Lyon and the Gnat* the female gnat forces the lion to propose a truce with "the Terms to be her Own." The mother is the voice of wisdom and insight in *The Young Rat and his Dam*, much like the maternal figures Charlotte Smith will create in the stories in *Conversations Introducing Poetry*. Finch also creates a new kind of fable within the category of tales of husbands and wives. *The Goute and the Spider*, *The Prevalence of Custom*, and the Wellesley manuscript's *A Tale* are examples. The last has one of the best-developed character voices in all of the fables, and in *The Prevalence of Custom* the wife, who creates an elaborate scene to reform her

drunkard husband, is humorously addressed as "her Phantomship." The majority of these poems show husbands influenced, if at all, by perseverance and hectoring. The husband in *A Tale* and the lion give in, but the drunk in *The Prevalence of Custom* is judged likely to be reformed only by hanging (the halter). The traces of the Aesopian tradition of stories of imbalances in power meet contemporary literary writings on how women might carve out influence and happiness within marriage in original but unsettling ways within the larger body of Finch's work.

Finch's fables were frequently anthologized. Nine of the thirteen poems by Finch in *Poems by Eminent Ladies* (1755) are fables. While for almost all of the other poets represented in that work the number of poems is reduced in the 1785 edition, all of her poems are reprinted. Later women poets, including Mary Masters, Mary Leapor, Clara Reeve, and Charlotte Smith, took notice of Finch's uses of the fable and distinguished themselves within the form, sometimes mentioning her example. Those critics who pronounce that the fable died in the first half of the century or who have to seek it in prose fiction would do well to reread the poetry of later women. They illustrate how well suited and subversive the form was for the expression of gender and class. Charlotte Smith used it to make pointed comments about such things as unfaithful husbands, and her reworkings of fables by Aesop, Pilpay, and La Fontaine often reverse the perspective to that of the woman in the tale. Her poem *The Lark's Nest* (1807) moves through a series of different, vividly evoked moods that quickly gender the birds:

> Then, by her duty fix'd, the tender mate
> Unwearied press'd
> Their future progeny beneath her breast,
> And little slept and little ate,
> While her gay lover, with a careless heart,
> As is the custom of his sex,
> . . . . . .
> And far above the floating vapour sings
> At such a height . . .
>
> (Curran, 269)

The poem conditions the reader to worry about the little birds and their anxious, dedicated mother, and the moral is drawn from the birds and the farmworkers, whose harvest the birds must escape: "What a man undertakes himself is done." The mother and babies have come to watch out for themselves, and only when they hear the farmer say that he has given up on help and will cut the wheat

himself do they know they must move. Mary Leapor's fables exhibit her sharp powers of observation, her tart tongue, and her unsparing themes, as do *The Fox and the Hen. A Fable* and *The Libyan Hunter, a Fable.* Fables were increasingly used by women to punish class pretensions and to comment on gendered customs. Leapor's *The Sow and the Peacock* tells the story of a sow who falls for a glittering peacock and cleans herself up ("Then rubb'd her Sides against a Tree, / And now as clean as Hogs can be"). In this class and gender commentary, the peacock offends the sow, who gives him a tart answer and ceases to desire him. Equally typical is *The Rose and other Flowers, a Tale; inscribed to a young Lady*, by Mary Masters. The rose haughtily names herself queen of flowers but is put down by a cowslip. Throughout the century, Finch's fables were reprinted. They cast a long shadow, and women's fables clearly reveal the politics—public and private—of their authors. In Finch's hands, the fable became women's major satiric form and a subversive, unsparing way to comment on the situation of women.

Many of Finch's poems are in another highly popular form, the pastoral dialogue. Today the pastoral is considered even more harmless than fables, but it is highly useful for an oppressed group and was frequently used by women poets to express a very wide variety of subversive themes.[50] *The Bargain. A Song in dialogue between Bacchus and Cupid* and *Some Reflections In a Dialogue between* TERESA *and* ARDELIA. *On the 2nd and 3rd Verses of the 73rd Psalm* suggest how many subjects Finch brought it to address.[51] The best of her and other women's pastorals bring the idyllic into grating contact with reality. Typical of Finch's is *A Pastoral Dialogue between Two Shepherdesses*, which concludes with an acerbic, realistic appraisal. It begins with the older Silvia urging Dorinda to rest in an archetypally pastoral setting. "Pretty nymph! within this shade, / Whilst the Flocks to rest are laid, / Whilst the World dissolves in Heat, / Take this cool and flow'ry Seat." Dorinda, however, is eager to join "All the swains [who] some mirth pursue" (Reynolds, 145). Her lines are musical, delightfully feminine versions of *carpe diem* poems. Silvia repeatedly deflates Dorinda's imagined love stories, but Finch allows Dorinda the last word, an assessment of women's experiences:

> What thou wert, I need not know,
> What I am, must haste to show.
> Only this I now discern,
> From the things, thou'd'st have me learn,
> *That Woman-kind's peculiar Joys*
> *From past, or present Beauties rise.*
>
> (Reynolds, 147)

More than most poems, women's poems in the pastoral mode bring to our attention genre conventions and contested structures of feeling. Elizabeth Carter, for instance, juxtaposes Renaissance concepts and contemporary opinions to rewrite centuries of male tradition in her clever poem *A Dialogue:* "Says *Body* to *Mind*, 'Tis amazing to see, / We're so nearly related yet never agree, / . . . / As great Plagues to each other as Husband and Wife."[52] Such poems demonstrate women's willingness to write blatantly disputatious dialogues and their ability to adapt a form deemed appropriately feminine for such purposes. In spite of being marred by the conventional "ruddy sun descends" and "pearly dews," Elizabeth Rowe's *Love and Friendship: A Pastoral*, from her 1696 collection of poems, is one of the best of the pastoral dialogues on a popular debate, one gaining increasing, heated comment in plays. Her characters debate whether friendship or heterosexual love is superior. Amaryllis says, "Let us, beneath these spreading trees, recite / What from our hearts our muses may indite." Then Sylvia praises friendship in the person of Aminta, and Amaryllis heterosexual love personified by Alexis. Although Amaryllis has the last word, the poem leaves the impression that friendship has won the day.[53] This poem can be compared with Elizabeth Tollet's *Pastoral: In memory of Mrs. Elizabeth Blackler, 1717*. In both, female friendship not only brings contentment and joy rather than restlessness and anxiety but also, and more significantly, inspires and "refines" the women's poetry. In Rowe's poem, Amaryllis feels a need for secrecy:

> Let us, beneath these spreading trees, recite
> What from our hearts our muses may indite.
> Nor need we, in this close retirement, fear,
> Least any swain our am'rous secrets hear.

In contrast, Sylvia feels completely unrestrained:

> To ev'ry shepherd I would mine proclaim;
> Since fair *Aminta* is my softest theme:
> A stranger to the loose delights of love,
> My thoughts the nobler warmth of friendship prove.
> And, while its pure and sacred fire I sing,
> Chaste goddess of the groves, thy succour bring.
> (*Misc. Works*, 1:11–12)

The poem quickly becomes a beautiful, interwoven composition reminiscent of the popular music of the day, as Amaryllis echoes,

> Propitious god of love, my breast inspire
> With all thy charms, with all thy pleasing fire:
> Propitious god of love, thy succour bring.

From that point on, each speech echoes and counterbalances the one before it:

> SYLVIA: On flow'ry banks, by ev'ry murm'ring stream,
> *Aminta* is my muse's softest theme:
> 'Tis she that does my artful notes refine:
> With fair *Aminta*'s name my noblest verse shall shine.
> AMARYLLIS: I'll twine fresh garlands for Alexis' brows,
> And consecrate to him eternal vows:
> The charming youth shall my *Apollo* prove;
> He shall adorn my songs, and tune my voice to love
> (1:12–13)

Such adaptations of the pastoral are ways these women wrote themselves into their work through representations of writing itself and of their secret inspirations for writing. These same themes develop and flower as the friendship poem gains popularity.

Almost unnoticed is the amount of theatrical writing done by women not known as dramatists, including Finch, either to amuse themselves or with the hope of performance. As they did with fable and pastoral dialogue, they made it into another covert means of doing what Nancy Miller has called weaving their "signature" into their work.[54] Drama was the prestige genre, but theater—the plays, the actors, the managers, and their politics—were the rage. Women had had considerable success as playwrights especially in the 1690s, and most of them had also achieved some success as poets. Especially early in the century, the theater created a demand for poets. Each play had the obligatory poetic prologue and epilogue, and in many plays each act ended with a poetic comment. Most plays included a number of songs. One of Finch's first publications was the song "Love, thou art best of Human Joys," performed in Thomas Wright's play *The Female Vertuosos* (1693) and reprinted in the same year in a special issue of the *Gentleman's Journal*.[55] Theatrical poetry was richly varied, many of these smaller pieces were commissioned, and women poets did not miss the fact that they provided a ready-made space for social comment. Left untitled in the Wellesley manuscript is a poem on Wycherley's Sir Plausible in *The Plain Dealer* that Finch uses to condemn a kind of person that must have irritated her extremely: "Fast as

Camelions change their dye / Has still some applicable story / To gratify or Whig or Tory [*sic*] / And with a Jacobite in tatters / If met alone he smoothly flatters" (*Wellesley*, 53). Her *Epilogue to the Tragedy of Jane Shore to be spoken by Mrs. Oldfield* captures what women still find so mesmerizing in the character of Jane Shore. The epilogue reviews Shore's contrasting states of being with a running commentary on the culture's responses to the aging of women. In this well-executed poem the epilogue strikes through precise, masterful word choice at the public's double standard, not just in sexual matters but in general moral conduct:

> There is a season, which too fast approaches,
> And every list'ning beauty nearly touches;
> When handsome Ladies, falling to decay,
> Pass thro' new epithets to smooth the way;
> From *fair* and *young* transportedly confess'd,
> Dwindle to *fine*, *well fashion'd*, and *well dress'd*.
> Thence as their fortitude's extremest proof,
> To *well as yet;* from *well* to *well enough;*
> Till having on such weak foundation stood,
> Deplorably at last they sink to *good*.
> Abandon'd then, 'tis time to be retir'd,
> And seen no more, when not alas! admir'd.
> By men indeed a better fate is known.
>
> (Reynolds, 101)

The aged man "is a fop of consequence till death," she writes, obviously enjoying the way epithets "smooth the way." The epilogue shows an astute grasp of the convention, ending, "Pray let me see you here again to-morrow." Barbara McGovern has argued that Finch wrote this poem in dialogue with Pope, who had ended his epilogue for Rowe's benefit night by asking women to vote for their pleasure in the play by coming to "stare the strumpet down."[56] In Pope's epilogue, which Oldfield refused to speak, it is unclear whether Jane Shore or Oldfield is the strumpet to be stared down. Finch asks the women to decide whether they like the "mortified" and "whining" Shore and, if so, to "throng" the theater. Finch adeptly brings to mind what Shore must have been as a historical, fascinating woman and, as the women had enjoyed Dryden's Cleopatra depicted in various states, what they could have had instead of the "whining" one: "I all her glorious history run o'er, / And thought he would have shewn her on the stage, / In the first triumphs of her blooming age" (Reynolds, 100). Finch, like Pope,

takes advantage of the conventional conflation of assumed persona and speaking actor common to prologues and epilogues. She dramatizes what she imagines Oldfield herself might say and gives the epilogue a distinctive voice that plays off the actress's great performance skills and what the audience knew of her private life.

Finch wrote plays, and in *The Triumph of Love and Innocence* and *Aristomenes* she shows her understanding of where songs were placed and how they were used in the tragedies of her time. These examples of her keen intellect and poetic skill include such striking moments as a musical dialogue, *Fallen wretch, make haste and dye*, which represents Aristomenes' state of mind and the cultural imperatives that shape his thoughts. The first voice counsels suicide:

> Fallen Wretch! make haste, and Dye!
> To that last Asylum fly,
> Where no anxious Drops of Care,
> Where no sighing Sorrows are,
> Friends or Fortune none deplore,
> None are Rich and none are Poor,
> Nor can Fate oppress them more.
> To this last Asylum fly,
> Fallen Wretch! make haste and Dye!
> (Reynolds, 360)

Aristomenes answers, "Thou counsell'st rightly." The second voice breaks in and sings two verses beginning, "Stay, oh! stay; 'tis all Delusion." The voices then exchange lines, and Aristomenes takes heart for the moment (Reynolds, 360–62). Based on the historical prince of the Messenians and the Arcadians, Aristomenes is a good man caught in a series of circumstances in which there is no clear moral imperative. He is captured by the Lacedemonians and offered what he considers a dishonorable release, and he is indirectly responsible for the death of his son's beloved.[57] Finch's command of meter and language in passages such as this gives these verses energy and musicality, and they are a skillful variant on the popular "Choice of . . ." art of the period.

It is hard to find a woman poet who did not write some theater poetry. They chastised their society and spoke to other women through these poems. Mary Whateley Darwall's *Epilogue Written for a Favorite Actress* ridicules miserly men who are suddenly dazzled by a beautiful young woman and marry foolishly. She makes it clear, however, that the chief danger—and her warning—is to women:

> Nor yet too cheaply yield the woo'd consent.
> Lest the inconstant leave you to repent: —
> But tread the middle path to Hymen's fame,
> Where, blest and blessing, long may you remain
> Pattern of virtue, — free from care and strife,
> Possess'd of ev'ry joy that sweetens life.[58]

Her *Poems on Several Occasions* (1794) shows that she was reading drama avidly and writing for theaters where she knew people. "The Song of the Sisters of Ivar. The thought taken from Thompson's *Alfred*" is followed by *Address, spoken by Miss Mellon, on her benefit night, at the Theatre, Walsall* and *Address, spoken by Mrs. Nunns, on her first appearance at the theatre, Edinburgh*. She wrote at least two other epilogues that were performed. Her biographer, Ann Messenger, describes her as "addicted to theater" and points out some ways that drama influenced her poetry.[59] Mary Barber wrote *Epilogue to a Comedy acted at Bath, where the Dutchess of Ormond was present* and printed her friend Constantia Grierson's *Prologue to "Theodosius" . . . at the Theatre in Dublin* in her *Poems on Several Occasions*.[60] Laetitia Pilkington wrote prologues, and Clara Reeve's *Prologue to a Play That Never was Acted. Which remains unacknowledged, and unanswered, in the hands of a certain m[anage]r* (1769) demonstrates how well she understood one of the most popular shapes of prologues. It begins, "To speak bold truths, to lash a vicious age, / Was once esteem'd, the province of the stage" and concludes with a dignified case for the play that flatters (cajoles) the audience:

> To canvass for your favor he disdains,
> His honest muse no servile flatt'ry stains;
> From Nature's ample field those flow'rs he brought,
> For ornament and use a garland wrought.
> To Nature's friends he pleads his cause as fit,
> Merits true patrons, arbiters of wit.[61]

These smooth, heroic couplets recall Pope, Shakespeare, and Horace, thereby making an understated case for the play's literary achievement. Later women even wrote oratorios and operettas. One of Mary Robinson's operettas was performed with *Macbeth* on 30 April 1778, and she wrote another called *Kate of Aberdeen* (1793) (Pascoe, 59). Reeve published *Ruth: An Oratorio* (1769) with an essay on musical composition. Many tributes to dramatists survive, and they vary from being addressed to predictable men (Tollet on Congreve, 1724) to the

surprising (Pilkington's *To Samuel Foote*, 1753). *A Collection of Miscellany Poems* (1737) includes a number of theater pieces, but they are largely squeezed out of later anthologies by Robert Dodsley and others.

Poetry on Poetry

Finch is especially important to later poets because she grappled so imaginatively and consistently with what it meant to be a writer and what kind of poet she wanted to be. As in her fables, she had the ability to invoke specific, immediate conditions, including her gender, within various historical and poetic traditions. She lived out what it means to be a serious writer by studying poetry, by writing consistently and seriously, by experimenting, polishing, and revising.

The poem she chose in lieu of an explanatory dedication or preface for the 1713 *Miscellany Poems* turns on its head the conventional "I will be indifferent to critics" statement. It was, perhaps predictably, a fable: *Mercury and the Elephant*. The elephant says that he is resigned to the "twenty-thousand Scandals" that are being circulated on earth about his fight with a boar, but he is deeply concerned about how representations of him and the fight are being received by the gods:

> But I defy the Talk of Men,
> Or Voice of Brutes in ev'ry Den;
> Th' impartial Skies are all my Care,
> And how it stands Recorded there.
> Amongst you Gods, pray, What is thought?
> Quoth *Mercury* — Then have you Fought!
> (Reynolds, 3)

This devastating exclamation exposes the elephant's self-absorption and ridiculous self-centeredness. The tale is mirrored in the next verse:

> Solicitous thus shou'd I be
> For what's said of my Verse and Me;
> Or shou'd my Friends Excuses frame,
> And beg the Criticks not to blame
> (Since from a Female Hand it came)
> Defects in Judgment, or in Wit;
> They'd but reply — Then has she Writ!
> (3–4)

By taking the position that she is as inconsequential to the London critical world as the elephant is to the gods, Finch frees herself to invoke an intimate circle of readers and poets who "for our Selves, not [critics], we *Write.*"[62] She seems to be thinking of the experience she knew as a poet who circulated her poems among friends.[63] Eighteenth-century prefaces often purported to leave their books in the hands of readers to enjoy or not, to appreciate or not (even as they told readers how to read), and in this fable Finch balances this transparent diffidence with the truth of the writer's life, the habit and obsession of writing. In every writer's mind such readers, who would want to protect her and might "beg the Critics," might grow in number upon publication. There is a combination of modesty, astute analysis, understanding of poetic conventions, and frank self-assertion in her portrayal of writing, the literary landscape, and herself as a writer.

Throughout her work, Finch demonstrates an easy understanding of poetry's position and popularity in the culture, as she does in *A Tale of the Miser and the Poet.* During the reign of Queen Anne, writers suffered a marked decline in patronage, and Finch contributes one of the most original and good-natured poems of complaint. ". . . Your Time is ended, / And *Poetry* no more befriended," Mammon says and compares the present to ". . . when *Charles* was swaying; / . . . When witty Beggars were in fashion" (Reynolds, 191–92). Misers, not poets, are valued, he explains. She has pithy lines on her major contemporaries Prior, Vanbrugh, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Nicholas Rowe, and Ambrose Philips, pointing out that none has gained any advantages from publishing poetry; rather, all are "slighted" and "discarded." Suddenly the poem is specifically about her:

> What Pref'rence has ARDELIA seen,
> T'expel, tho' she cou'd write the *Spleen?*
> Of Coach, or Tables, can you brag,
> Or better Cloaths than Poet RAG?
> Do wealthy Kindred, when they meet you
> With Kindness, or Distinction, greet you?
> Or have your lately flatter'd Heroes
> Enrich'd you like the Roman *Maroes?*
> (Reynolds, 193)

The fable ends with the poet deciding to bury her wit, as Mammon had his coin, until the time comes "When *Wit* shall please, and *Poets* thrive." There is a placid optimism in this final verse: the Poet counts on "Time, which hastily advances, / And gives to all new Turns and Chances" (Reynolds, 193).

More fraught is *The Goute and the Spider*, for the poet is figured in three ways: as the spider (a fury "from th' Infernal pitt"), as the good wife who alertly sweeps the cobwebs away, and as the Ardelia of the final verse ("Who by a tender and officious care" will ease his pain). The spider receives most of the attention, and her joy in weaving the beautiful web in a conspicuous place is the image that lingers in the mind. The ending, "each his propper Station learn to know," is much quoted. The virago with the broom reprimands the artistic ambition, and the suffering husband recalls his loving wife to a willing duty. The themes of ambition, duty, and station and the tension between recognition and the conduciveness to writing found in retirement are appropriately represented by a spider web, intricately woven, sometimes unnoticed and sometimes drawing concentrated attention. A group of Finch's fables treat writing and life changes more obliquely but with a comfortable self-awareness. The shepherd in *The King and the Shepherd* returns to his pipe, and the shepherd in *The Shepherd and the Calm* rebuilds his happy, pastoral life after an ill-advised sea adventure. In just as many, however, "piping" is ineffectual, as it is in *The Shepherd Piping to the Fishes*, or potentially dangerous and unpopular. Like the other poets of her generation, Finch is concerned with the responsible use of her art. The jester in *The Jester and the Little Fishes* misuses his, and *The Lawrell* states clearly that the laurel and the bays should "be apply'd to publick Good / And triumph in subduing Factions" (*Wellesley*, 112). Even *The Hog, the Sheep, and Goat, Carrying to a Fair* can be read as an allegory about writers. The hog has "extended Sight" and, as in human nature, cannot resist telling the sheep and the goat that they are on their way to slaughter: "And who has greater Sense, but Greater Sorrow Shares?" (Reynolds, 182). The thought was widely agreed upon in the eighteenth century, as illustrated by Robinson Crusoe's musings and Gray's famous "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." Finch, however, puts a writerly mind at the center of the tale.

Statements on the condition of being a woman poet and revelations of the self-conscious artist appear in almost every form she used. *The Critick and the Writer of Fables*, for instance, captures the appeal of her favorite form: "Weary, at last, of the *Pindarick* way, / . . . / To *Fable* I descend with soft Delight." She explains how they "Teach, as Poets shou'd, whilst they Divert."[64] She shows easy awareness of the reputations and uses of various poetic modes, and her imaginative use of the fable form should be placed beside similar, drearier poems such as Parnell's *Essay on the Different Styles of Poetry* (1713) and the later *Harlequin-Horace, or the Art of Modern Poetry* (1731) by James Miller. Finch comments gracefully on the purposes of poetry in general and on her own poetic aspirations and enjoyments. The critic chides the poet, who responds by offering to write

popular forms of verse, such as the pastoral. The critic insists on satire: ". . . if thou wouldst move our Thoughts, / . . . / Display the Times, *High-Church* or *Low* provoke." "Must that single Stream the Town supply?" the fable writer responds (Reynolds, 155), and this fable and her others more than carry the day.

Jennifer Keith is undoubtedly correct to describe Finch as "turning upside down the hierarchy of poetic kinds,"[65] and what Finch did with some of the most traditional and popular as she transformed them into poems about writing suggests her flexibility and experimental spirit. In the vernacular *Ballad to Mrs. Catherine Fleming in London from Malshanger farm in Hampshire* she begins by contrasting the city, which she has just left, and the country, and her verse gradually changes to capture the tranquillity of the country and her dedication to poetry. In the first verse, she writes,

> To let you know we are got down,
> From hurry, smoke, and drums:
> And every visitor that rowls,
> In restless Coach from Mall to Paul's.
> (*Wellesley*, 56)

By the eighth verse the consonants have changed, and the lines flow uninterrupted by breaks or internal rhymes:

> Thro' verdant circles as we stray,
> To which no end we know;
> As we o'er hanging boughs survey,
> And tufted grass below:
> Delight into the fancy falls,
> And happy days and *verse recalls*.
> (57–58, emphasis mine)

This stanza begins the turn toward poetry writing as the subject, and in the conclusion she explains the relationship between setting, personal mood, and verse form:

> Mean while accept what I have writ,
> To shew this rural scene;
> Nor look for sharp satyrick wit,
> From off the balmy plain:
> The country breeds no thorny bays,
> But mirth and love and honest praise.[66]

Everyone wrote "sessions of the poets" poems, and Finch's *Circuit of Apollo* is among the best.[67] In these poems Apollo, god of music and poetry, descends from Olympus, holds a contest among poets, and either selects those who will inhabit Olympus or crowns the very best. The contestants are sometimes drawn from the entire history of poetry, antiquity to the present; sometimes from all of the poets of a single nation; and sometimes from a group of living writers. Finch limits her contest to Kent and cleverly has Apollo making a circuit, as secular judges did at that time. Aphra Behn, like herself, was from Kent, so she begins the poem with a tribute to Behn as she introduces Apollo's visit. He discovers "that Poets were not very common / But most that pretended to Verse, were the Women."

> He lamented for Behn o're that place of her birth,
> And said amongst Femmens[68] was not on the earth
> Her superiour in fancy, in language, or witt,
> Yett own'd that a little too loosly she writt;
> Since the art of the Muse is to stirr up soft thoughts,
> Yett to make all hearts beat, without blushes or faults.
>
> (Reynolds, 92)

He "Resolv'd to encourage the few that he found" (92), and Finch introduces four competitors for the bays, herself last. Sound is carefully harmonized to content, and her poetic values firmly articulated, as when Alinda begins "with a song upon Love."

> So easy the Verse, yett compos'd with such art,
> That not one expression fell short of the heart;
> Apollo himself, did their influence obey,
> He catch'd up his Lyre, and a part he wou'd play,
> Declaring, no harmony else, cou'd be found,
> Fitt to wait upon words, of so moving a sound.
>
> (93)

Laura reads a poem praising Orinda, Katherine Philips; thus, Finch pays tribute to both her female predecessors. In the verse about herself Apollo exposes her ambition:

> Ardelia came last as expecting least praise,
> Who writt for her pleasure and not for the Bays,
> But yett, as occasion, or fancy should sway,

> Wou'd sometimes endeavour to passe a dull day
> In composing a song, or a Scene of a Play
> Not seeking for Fame, which so little does last,
> That e're we can taste itt, the Pleasure is Past.
> But Appollo reply'd, tho' so carelesse she seemd,
> Yett the Bays, if her share, wou'd be highly esteem'd.
> (93–94)

The poem ends with a witty description of Apollo's fear that if he chooses, Paris's fate might be his own. Anapests sustain the tone and are deployed especially effectively in lines where judgments are being made.

The tone allows Finch to make bold critical statements yet maintain her modest and feminine stance, one described in this poem and elsewhere as writing "for her pleasure and not for the Bays." These lines, like the myth of the reluctant-to-publish Philips have often been quoted, sometimes as the proper attitude for a woman and sometimes as the mind-set that prevents women from achieving the heights of Milton and Pope. This poem's context is complicated, however, and its statement subtle. Finch had seen how fleeting fame was, indeed how having a name could bring troubles down on a family. She does say clearly, however, that the bays "wou'd be highly esteem'd." In *The Patriarch's Wife* Margaret Ezell has convincingly demonstrated how men and women of Finch's generation lived in a culture of manuscript circulation and circles of trusted readers, people who were trusted either because of their expertise or because of their friendship. Writers feared with good reason the loss of control of the content of their manuscripts. The number of writers who complained about "imperfect" copies and unauthorized publication is very high. Moreover, writers learned that their reputations could be burnished or tarnished by the reputations of those who published them, as Elizabeth Singer Rowe and Jane Barker had learned.[69] A study of who women allowed to publish their novels, plays, and poems shows the tightest and narrowest control over their poetry. Finch's lines here express *writers'* attitudes, her life experiences, and gendered sensibility.

Finch left three notable poems that wove together the writing life and a happy marriage. "This to the Crown, and blessing of my life, / The much lov'd husband, of a happy wife," Finch begins *An Invitation to Dafnis.* In this poem as in several others, she writes about her husband's encouragement of her writing, and a portrait of deep companionship, mutual respect, and sexual attraction emerges convincingly. Beautifully written with the kind of precise expression and dignity

that the best heroic couplet poems of the age achieve, the poem shows a balanced love, the ideal before sexual passion and love were uncoupled:

> To him, whose constant passion found the art
> To win a stubborn, and ungratefull heart;
> And to the World, by tend'rest proof discovers
> They err, who say that husbands can't be lovers.
> With such return of passion, as is due,
> Daphnis I love, Daphnis my thoughts persue,
> Daphnis, my hopes, my joys, are bounded all in you.
> (Reynolds, 19–20)

The repetition of his name becomes a happy chorus, and there is a real chorus in *An Invitation to Dafnis*. It urges, "Come, and the pleasures of the feilds [*sic*], survey, / And throo' the groves, with your Ardelia stray." Framed by beautiful nature poetry with a great deal of specific detail are descriptions of what they will experience together: "But all shall form a concert to delight, / And all to peace, and all to love envite" (Reynolds, 29).

These poems by Finch often integrate her thoughts on poetry and on herself as poet, as seen in *To Mr. F. Now Earl of W. Who going abroad, had desired Ardelia to write some Verses upon whatever Subject she thought fit, against his Return in the Evening*. This 1689 poem shows her husband's encouragement of her writing, and she calls him a husband "who indulg'd her Verse." The poem invokes the courtly forms within which they had lived:

> Unto *Parnassus* strait she sent,
> And bid the Messenger, that went
> Unto the *Muses* Court,
> Assure them, she their Aid did need
> And begg'd they'd use their utmost Speed.
> (Reynolds, 20)

The Muses greet the request with amazement—praise for a Spouse! The lighthearted satire of the town continues: "Yet since *Ardelia* was a Friend, / Excuses 'twas agreed to send." They tell her, "They need no Foreign Aid invoke, / . . . / Who dictate from the Heart" (23).

Later women published excellent poems that praise husbands and the married state either as genuine tributes or as ways to put another, better way of life into circulation. Many of them, like *To Mr. F.*, mingle expressions of love for a spouse

with the sources of their creative powers. For instance, Charlotte Lennox's *Aminta and Delia* (1747) is a conventional pastoral but also a poem about poetry and writing.[70] Aminta says, "Thee, gentle Maid, may ev'ry Muse inspire, / And *Phoebus* bless thee with poetic Fire, / May thy soft Numbers ev'ry Bosom warm," but Delia answers in the manner of Finch's Muse, "The lovely Object of my soft Desire, / Philander only can my Songs inspire; / For him my Numbers flow, my Shepherd's Praise / Adorns each Line, and smooths my artless Lays."[71] Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *The Rights of Woman* (composed 1795) seems to be an archetypal protest poem. It begins, "Yes, injured Woman! rise, assert thy right!" It concludes, however, with a portrait of a happy marriage: "Subduing and subdued. . . . / In Nature's school, by her soft maxims taught, / That separate rights are lost in mutual love" (Fullard, 357–58). Many of these happy-marriage poems are brief, beautiful love poetry. Another example from Finch's generation is Mary Monck's dignified *Verses Wrote on her Death-Bed at Bath* (1716) in heroic couplets: "Thou, who dost all my worldly thoughts employ, / Thou pleasing source of all my earthly joy: / Thou tend'rest husband, and thou best of friends" (Lonsdale, 72).

Finch's *The Introduction* is a justly famous, dignified defense of women's writing. It is often quoted as expressing the crippling attitudes women poets encountered, or feared they would encounter:

> And if some one, wou'd Soar above the rest,
> With warmer fancy, and ambition press't,
> So strong, th' opposing faction still appears,
> The hopes to thrive, can ne're outweigh the fears,
> Be caution'd then my Muse, and still retir'd.
>
> (Reynolds, 6)

Citing the biblical Deborah, "the judge and restorer of the house of Israel," as the central example of women's important, national role as poets, she asks, "How are we fal'n, fal'n by mistaken rules?" In pageants honoring Queen Elizabeth I, Deborah was often one of the figures who saluted and advised her;[72] thus, by bringing to mind a biblical and an English figure, Finch adds depth and poignancy to "how are we fallen."

A cluster of Finch's poems testify to the fact that she, like other intellectual women from Mary Astell through Mary Wollstonecraft, understood that their minds were not cultivated as earlier women's had been. Whether they located that golden time in mythology or earlier history, that was the "fall" they lamented at least as often as Eve's. In *A Description of One of the Pieces of Tapestry at Long-*

leate, for example, Finch writes that Arachne "shar'd the Fame, / And with the *Heroes* mixt her interwoven Name / No longer, *Females* to such Praise aspire." She, however, asserts,

> All Arts are by the *Men* engross'd,
> And Our few Talents unimprov'd or cross'd;
> Even I, who on this Subject wou'd compose,
> Which the fam'd *Urbin* for his pencil chose,
> (And here, in tinctur'd Wool we now behold
> Correctly follow'd in each Shade, and Fold)
> Shou'd prudently from the Attempt withdraw,
> But Inclination proves the stronger Law:
> And tho' the Censures of the World pursue
> These hardy Flights, whilst his *Designs* I view;
> My burden'd Thoughts, which labour for a Vent,
> Urge me t'explain in Verse, what by each Face is meant.
>
> (Reynolds, 47)

Finch, like Arachne, refuses to withdraw from the contest, although it would seem that she would be overmatched by Ovid, Urbin, the Longleate tapestry, and, of course, Arachne. Here and in other poems she refuses to "withdraw." *An Epistle from Ardelia to Mrs. Randolph* echoes some of these poems' themes and draws encouragement from another woman's writing. She begins, "Madam, / till pow'rfully convinc'd by you, / I thought those Praises never were Their due, / Which I had read, or heard bestow'd by Men / On Women, that have ventur'd on the Pen." Mrs. Randolph's poem, she says, "gives us Faith," that women will "To Poetry renew our Ancient Claime" (Reynolds, 95).

Several of Finch's other poems include lines that affirm women's intellectual and poetic powers, that assert faith in the Creator's distribution of such gifts to both sexes, and that conclude with a sly reminder of the power women have over men and of men's need for women. *The Unequal Fetters*, for example, concludes:

> Marriage does but slightly tye Men
> Whil'st close Pris'ners we remain
> They the larger Slaves of Hymen
> Still are begging Love again
> At the full length of all their chain.
>
> (Reynolds, 151)

Although Finch consistently says that she writes only for her amusement, she equally consistently insists on the pleasure in wit and women's claim to it, that high faculty of the mind producing apt association of thought and expression often in surprising, delightful analogies. Sometimes her tone is strong and straightforward, as in "Witt, as free, and unconfin'd." Her sense of her intellectual and poetic freedom seems a spring encouraging her remarkable virtuosity. She can be astonishingly irreverent and surprising. " 'Tis true I write and tell me by what Rule / I am alone forbid to play the fool," she begins in the witty poem *The Appology*. She then compares her writing to other women's "weaknesses." For instance, "Lamia to the manly Bumper flys," while the poet "heats her brain" by writing poetry (Reynolds, 13).

These poems stand as part of an important tradition of poems on the topic of women, writing, and normative pressures.[73] About the same time that Finch wrote *The Introduction*, Sarah Fyge Egerton wrote *The Emulation*, one of the earliest poetic comparisons of women to slaves. Its central theme is that "[Men] fear we should excel their sluggish Parts / Should we attempt the Sciences and Arts." The poem ends with her invitation to other women to write and claim "wit's empire." This poem, like some of Finch's, Chudleigh's, and other poets', finds permission to write partly from the Protestant insistence that all souls are equal and that women were responsible for reading the scripture and following their consciences. Egerton describes women's situation and then turns to their call to writing:

> Say, Tyrant Custom, why must we obey,
> The impositions of thy haughty Sway;
> From the first dawn of Life, unto the Grave,
> Poor Womankind's in every State, a Slave.
> The Nurse, the Mistress, Parent and the Swain,
> For Love she must, there's none escape that Pain;
> Then comes the last, the fatal Slavery,
> The Husband with insulting Tyranny
> Can have ill Manners justify'd by Law;
> For Men all join to keep the Wife in awe.
> *Moses* who first our Freedom did rebuke,
> Was Marry'd when he writ the Pentateuch;
> They're Wise to keep us Slaves, for well they know,
> If we were loose, we soon should make them, so.

We yeild [*sic*] like vanquish'd Kings whom Fetters bind,
When chance of War is to Usurpers kind;
Submit in Form; but they'd our Thoughts controul,
And lay restraints on the impassive Soul:
They fear we should excel their sluggish Parts,
Should we attempt the Sciences and Arts.
Pretend they were design'd for them alone,
So keep us Fools to raise their own Renown;
Thus Priests of old their Grandeur to maintain,
Cry'd vulgar Eyes would sacred Laws Prophane.
So kept the Mysteries behind a Screen,
There Homage and the Name were lost had they been seen:
But in this blessed Age, such Freedom's given,
That every Man explains the Will of Heaven;
And shall we Women now sit tamely by,
Make no excursions in Philosophy,
Or grace our Thoughts in tuneful Poetry?
We will our Rights in Learning's World maintain,
Wit's Empire, now, shall know a Female Reign;
Come, all ye Fair, the great Attempt improve,
Divinely imitate the Realms above:
There's ten celestial Females govern Wit,
And but two Gods that dare pretend to it;
And shall these finite Males reverse their Rules
No, we'll be Wits, and then Men must be Fools.[74]

Feminists have argued that women have been beaten away from writing, and Egerton tells this story. Encouraged to put sweetmeats and china, not books, in their closets, and their pens restricted to copying recipes and tips on home management, women in her poem *The Liberty* experience the full force of constructing custom. In a dramatic, transformative moment Egerton writes, "But I can't here, write my *Probatum est.* / My daring Pen, will bolder Sallies make, / And like my self, an uncheck'd freedom take; / Not chain'd to the nice Order of my Sex."[75] As the novelists were doing, she concluded by appealing to her readers to judge "with what reluctance they indure restraints." These lines broaden the lines from women as writers to women as English subjects with rights and responsibilities. Egerton's poem recognizes not only her daring in breaking the

rules but the importance of the *written* text itself. The poetry produced from the rebellion is as important as the act. Like Finch, she asserts that men oppress women because they fear they will excel them, and she constructs a voice that is that of both a woman and a writer.

It was this generation of women poets who joined novelists such as Jane Barker and Eliza Haywood and essayists such as Mary Astell in a serious critique of normative models of marriage and women's lives and began to answer some of the most public and publicized attacks on women's "nature" and aspirations. Egerton's *Female Advocate* (1686) was one of the major statements in the debates and one of the responses to Robert Gould's *Love Given O'er*.[76] After this exchange, every misogynistic satire would be countered by women writers. In *To the Lady Campbell, with a Female Advocate* Egerton explains that the poem was written when she was "scarce fourteen Years. And in less time than fourteen days 'twas done; / Without design of Publication writ." This poem and her other early work evidence a strong logical mind. In the address to the reader prefaced to *The Female Advocate* she writes, "I think, when a Man is so extravagant as to Damn all Womankind for the Crimes of a few, he ought to be corrected." Although Egerton systematically argues against each of Gould's points, she was particularly outraged by his assertions that women were innately evil and the most dangerous corrupters of men. Her poem opens with a plain-spoken attack at the point where she believes Gould is most vulnerable:

> Blasphemous Wretch! How canst thou think or say
> Some Curst or Banisht Fiend Usurpt the Sway
> When *Eve* was form'd? For then's deny'd by you
> God's Omnipresence and Omniscience too.[77]

Mary Chudleigh's *The Ladies Defence* (1701) responded also from the enabling Protestant ideology to John Sprint's sermon "The Bride-Woman's Counsellor," which she said he had sent her.[78] She also objects to the representation of God's creation of woman: "Who think us Creatures for Derision made, / And the Creator with his Works upbraid; / What he call'd Good, they proudly think not so," she writes. Insisting on women's having souls equal to men's and responsibility for their own salvation, these poems contest the depiction of the most essential destiny of women, their nature, and how they should be treated, especially in marriage. Egerton's poem foretells the direction moralist thought would take in the century and foresees its dangerous implications, for in being designated the primary keeper of the moral flame woman was also made "the Scape-

goat, and [bearer of the] sins of all the land."[79] Both Gould and Sprint attracted numerous supporters and opposers. One of the most unusual was Elizabeth Barry, the greatest actress of her generation, who refused to act in a play Gould had written because of his poems and especially because of his attacks on her and other women in *The Playhouse*.

The reading woman was rapidly becoming a threatening figure, and how much women should read was becoming a major cultural issue.[80] The male characters in Chudleigh's *The Ladies Defence* are given speeches that are economical summaries of the opposition to reading:

> *Sir John.* By Heav'n I wish 'twere by the Laws decreed
> They never more should be allow'd to Read.
> Books are the Bane of States, the Plagues of Life,
> But both conjoyn'd, when studied by a Wife:
> They nourish Factions, and increase Debate,
> Teach needless things, and causeless Fears create.
> From Plays and Novels they learn how to Plot,
> And from your Sermons all their Cant is got.
>
> (Ezell, 32)

And the Parson answers, "You're in the Right: Good things they misapply." Chudleigh's long dialogue poem often rises to true eloquence and fire, and Melissa's Enlightenment defense of reading is but one example:

> Beauty's a Trifle merits not my Care.
> I'd rather *Aesop's* ugly Visage wear,
> Joyn'd with his Mind, than be a Fool, and Fair.
> Brightness of Thought, and an extensive View,
> Of all the Wonders Nature has to shew;
> So clear, so strong, and so inlarg'd a Sight
> As can pierce thro' the gloomy Shades of Night,
> Trace the first Heroes to their dark Abodes,
> And find the Origine of Men and Gods:
> See Empires rise, and Monarchies decay,
> And all the Changes of the World survey
> The ancient and the modern Fate of Kings,
> From whence their Glory, or Misfortune springs;
> Wou'd please me more, than if in one combind,
> I'd all the Graces of the Female Kind.

But do not think 'tis an ambitious Heat,
To you I'll leave the being Rich and Great:
Your's be the Fame, the Profit, and the Praise;
We'll neither Rob you of your Vines, nor Bays:
Nor will we to Dominion once aspire;
You shall be Chief, and still your selves admire.
The Tyrant Man may still possess the Throne;
'Tis in our Minds that we wou'd Rule alone:
Those unseen Empires give us leave to sway,
And to our Reason private Homage pay.

(34)

Like Finch, Chudleigh finds fame unattractive, but she longs for learning and perspective, for a space in which she can be herself, think her own thoughts, and write. She gives a list beginning in Roman times of women "renown'd for Knowledge, and for Sense, / For sparkling Wit, and charming Eloquence." Elizabeth Tollet's *Hypatia* (1755) goes further in its defense of women's share in the Enlightenment.[81] Hypatia, daughter of the mathematician Theon, was a brilliant lecturer on philosophy who was torn to pieces by the Alexandrine mob. Tollet writes in her name a brilliant defense of women's pursuit of learning that has some of the spaciousness of midcentury poems such as Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* and many of the opinions propagated by end-of-the-century women such as Mary Wollstonecraft.

The cultivated Mind, a fertile Soil,
With rich Increase rewards the useful Toil;
But fallow left, an hateful Crop succeeds,
Of tangling Brambles, and pernicious Weeds.

She wants to "follow Nature in her winding Ways," and among her studies she lists how "the Elements combine," how metals form, "Whence knows th' refluent Ocean to obey / Th' alternate Impulse of the lunar Ray," and finally, and most ambitiously, through study of the past, "the distant Future to divine." Some of the poem echoes lines from the women's poems of a generation earlier: "What cruel Laws depress the female Kind, / To humble Cares and servile Tasks confin'd?" Genuine anger bursts forth: "Yet oft we hear, in Height of stupid Pride, / Some senseless Ideot curse a letter'd Bride. / Is this a Crime? for female Minds to share / The early Influence of instructive Care." Her final verse is a picture of triumph, a literal portrait of a woman who has escaped "Spleen and Censure."[82]

Appropriately, these women used poetry, the genre that is so often a portrait of a mind and soul, to defend that space for women writers.

Similar protests against the prevailing opinion of women's nature and place can be found in the work of all of the poets of this period. Elizabeth Tollet's "How hard a Fate enthrals the wretched Maid / By Tyrant Kindred barter'd and betray'd!" describes such women as "A living Victim and a captive Wife" and more fortunate if they die "in all the Pride of early Bloom" (*From Virgil*, in Lonsdale, 60). Finch's *Introduction* notes that writing women are told they "mistake" their "sex and way," but "Sure 'twas not ever thus." She catalogs women from the Bible "To whom, by the diffusive hand of Heaven / Some share of witt, and poetry was given." With this authority, she insists that women are now the victims of "mistaken rules" and educations (Reynolds, 4–6). Rowe also uses biblical women as enabling precursors and sometimes assumes the voice of the spouse in the Song of Songs to make her case. Many women used fables to make telling observations about the writing life; these moments are exceptionally easy to overlook and often seem highly personal. *The Parrots to Jaconetta*, by Clara Reeve, parades her learning a bit as she says she will fill in a gap left by Simonides in his collection of fables "to better our sex." His oversight is parrots, and the final kind is "much giv'n to writing, / . . . / So they borrow and wire-draw, and alter, and spoil, / To spin out a letter in Grandison's stile."[83]

The Spleen as Legacy

When Anne Finch died, she left the eighty-six poems published in her *Miscellany Poems*, a few others published in scattered places, and three manuscripts of poems, thereby leaving more unpublished than published poems.[84] Therefore, the women poets of the century did not produce the number of tributes to her that earlier women had for the more-published Aphra Behn. In all of the kinds of poetry she left, however, her identity as a serious, dedicated Poet shines through; her life and her culture's respect for her and her work were a major legacy. One of the few full-length tributes is Elizabeth Tollet's *In Memory of the Countess of Winchelsea*, which begins:

> Sad *Cypress* and the Muses Tree
> Shall shade *Ardelia's* sacred Urn:
> These with her Fame and Fate agree,
> And ever live, and ever mourn.

While ev'ry Muse with vocal Breath
In moving Strains recites her Praise:
And there assumes the *Cypress* Wreath,
And on her Tomb resigns the Bays.

Tollet writes that time will erase any monument to her, but

Wit, which outlasts the firmest Stone,
Shall, *Phoenix*-like, its life prolong:
No Verse can speak her but her own,
The Spleen must be her fun'ral Song.[85]

Notably, *The Spleen* is the poem Finch herself mentions in *The Miser and the Poet* as her claim to equal fame with Prior and others. Therefore, within an early example of a woman's poetic career Finch displays strong agency by identifying for herself a signature poem. Perhaps Finch's most anthologized work in the eighteenth century, it still speaks with humor, exasperation, tough-mindedness, and sympathy to anyone subject to moodiness. First published in Charles Gildon's 1701 *New Miscellany*, it continued to appear in collections such as Colman-Thornton's, Dodsley's, and Alexander Dyce's well into the nineteenth century. Before we turn in the next chapter to "higher" poetic kinds and additional examples of women poets' contributions to public debate, it is worth pausing over this poem, which is a useful bridge between chapters and a superb example of the union of the personal, the topical, and the universal. Although critics say it has lost favor,[86] the appeal of the honesty of its voice and its poetic virtuosity will never die.

Spleen as Finch uses the word derived from the ancient theory of the humours of the body, which determine the predominant mood of the mind and the physical ailments to which the person is most commonly susceptible.[87] As early as Timothy Bright in the 1580s, the source of melancholy was believed to be the spleen and the production of "black bile." By the early eighteenth century *spleen* had become something of a catchall term for a state of mind (most often moodiness, melancholy, lassitude, peevishness, depression, irritation, or some combination of them) with physical symptoms. It still carried many of the residual implications of "humour," but emergent within the term were two other connotations. First, British people were beginning to consider themselves especially prone to its melancholy manifestations, and in 1733 George Cheyne would title his best-selling book on melancholy *The English Malady*. Second, barely

beneath the surface was what has come to be called the Romantic theory of the artist, that of a person with the refined sensibility, extraordinary vision, and emotional power of genius.[88] This person was believed to be especially subject to brooding and melancholy and, indeed, was often represented as courting them. These structures of feeling and the increasing development of the gender politics inherent in the term give the poem unusual cultural resonance and significance.

In the difficult metrical form of the Pindaric ode, Finch describes spleen's myriad effects and suggests that no class, no sex, no person can be sure to be immune. She is careful to cite Brutus and "the ablest heads" and to avoid representing spleen as a weak woman's complaint.[89] Many of its images and ideas draw it into the group of Finch's poems about poetry.[90] Finch shows men *and* women subject to it, shows husbands *and* wives using it within their relationships, and describes it as performed by the fop *and* the coquette. In her vignettes both men and women can use the spleen for power, to get their way. Yet she seems to see the dangerous direction discourses about the spleen would take — toward vapors and hysteria for women and toward arbitrary power for men, including that of the artist who is allowed to retire "from the crowd." In line 53 she attaches "vapors" to an "imperious wife" and describes the "o'erheated passions" that are associated both with humours and with hysterical and manic behavior.

A form of arbitrary power is that of the physician over women. In lines 139–40 she writes, "Altho' [the physician's] growing Wealth he sees / Daily increased by Ladies Fees." By 1696 Thomas Sydenham was writing that "very few Women, which Sex is half of grown People, are quite free from every assault of the Disease, excepting those who [are] accustomed to labour."[91] Desirée Hellegers contrasts the treatment of men for the ailment with the horrendous and debilitating treatment of women. Men were encouraged to partake of wine and "flesh" (sex), while women were bled repeatedly and encouraged to keep busy in feminine and untaxing ways, such as painting on china.[92] Finch's primary purpose, however, is to create a powerful portrait of what spleen is really like and to separate that from the fashionable performances and the contemporary clichés and casualness about it. Inevitably, then, the poet must deploy the structures of feeling in the culture and establish her own perspective firmly, and it is this richness of opinion that gives the poem its unusual resonance and searching quality. In the opening verse Finch captures the moods of spleen:

> Now a Dead Sea thou'lt represent,
> A Calm of stupid Discontent,

Then, dashing on the Rocks wilt rage into a Storm.
Trembling sometimes thou dost appear,
Dissolved into a Panick Fear;
On Sleep intruding dost thy Shadows spread,
Thy gloomy Terrours round the silent Bed.
(Reynolds, 248)

Always alert to the various senses, she describes how such things as a flower's fragrance can suddenly "o'ercome the feeble Brain" and become an "offensive Scent." Whether she meant one of the effects of migraine headaches, had in mind some of the treatments for excessive animal spirits, or was illustrating "the rebellion of the senses against the soul," she makes a specific example of the way usually delightful sensations can suddenly become unbearable and shut down productive thought and behavior, a theme incrementally developed in the poem.[93] In the final verse she describes music as one of the remedies the stricken try: "*Musick* but soothes thee, if too sweetly sad, / And if too light, but turns thee gaily Mad."[94] Just as the jonquil's scent can become "Aromatick Pain," a contrast to the "fertile" garden in Paradise, where "all united Odours" give pleasure, so music and all other sources of pleasure can be transformed into painful sensory excess.

When she finally comes to speaking in first person, she writes as a poet:

I feel thy Force, whilst I against thee rail;
I feel my Verse decay, and my crampt Numbers fail.
Thro' thy black Jaundice I all Objects see,
As Dark, and Terrible as Thee,
My Lines decry'd, and my Employment thought
An useless Folly, or presumptuous Fault.
(250)

These lines have considerable immediacy. Not only do they interrupt the tone and the third-person voice of the poem but they seem to be describing the very moment of composition: "I feel thy Force," she says, "whilst I against thee rail" — and that is exactly what her poem is doing. As poets and critics have recognized from the beginning, this poem is an intimate portrait of the *satisfying* struggle to write and be a writer.[95] "I feel my Verse decay," she continues and captures a moment all writers know, that horrible feeling that the absorbing time of creativity has slipped away. The effects on her self-esteem, her *identity* expressed as being a poet, and on the poetry she tries to write contrast to her happy existence as a poet:

> Whilst in the *Muses* Paths I stray,
> Whilst in their Groves, and by their secret Springs
> My Hand delights to trace unusual Things,
> And deviates from the known, and common way.
> (250)

Finch's confidence in her originality, her willingness to "deviate" from the "common way," is of a piece with the poems and passages that describe her delight in writing and in being a dedicated Poet. Because "spleen" was consistently associated with superior intelligence and "quick spirits,"[96] Finch could make a subversive claim for her own genius through the disease. Milton's *Il Penseroso* was already one of the most popular and most respected of all poems, and it and poems such as Finch's began the movement to identify melancholy with subjectivity, artistic temperament, and genius.

But horrible things are happening in this poem. The description of the destruction of her poetic powers is followed by terse lines on the spleen's effect on her endeavor and identity:

> As Dark, and Terrible as Thee,
> My Lines decry'd, and my Employment thought
> An useless Folly, or presumptuous Fault.
> (250)

Paralleled to these lines is a description of the threat the spleen is to religion:

> By Thee *Religion*, all we know,
> That shou'd enlighten here below,
> Is veil'd in Darkness, and perplext
> With anxious Doubts, with endless Scruples vext.
> (Reynolds, 251)

Thus, spleen has the same effect on other aspects she deems essential components of personality, including religion. The classical ode traditionally attested to humankind's connection to the gods, and here Finch has adapted this theme to her own time. The spleen's transformative power over the delightful and good, then, threatens more than happiness and productivity in life; it becomes a devastating barrier to faith, the essential requirement of salvation. Robert Burton in *Anatomy of Melancholy* summarized this Jacobean theme: "Poor distressed souls . . . religiously given, [who] have tender consciences" read such passages as

" 'Many are called but few are chosen.' . . . They doubt of their election . . . torture and crucify themselves . . . they lay open a gap to the devil by desperation to carry them to hell."[97]

A final horror remains.[98] The poem begins with the question,

> What art thou, *SPLEEN*, which ev'ry thing dost ape?
> Thou *Proteus* to abus'd Mankind,
> Who never yet thy real Cause cou'd find.
>
> (248)

As others have noted, over the course of the poem she describes its myriad manifestations and effects masterfully—better than the physicians and medical authorities had, so well that William Stukeley quotes it to introduce his medical treatise *Of the Spleen* (1723).[99] She concludes the poem with an extended portrait of Richard Lower, the distinguished physician and member of the Royal Society who was a leading expert on spleen:

> 'Till thinking Thee to've catch'd, Himself by thee was caught,
> Retain'd thy Pris'ner, thy acknowledg'd Slave,
> And sunk beneath thy Chain to a lamented Grave.
>
> (252)

Her contemporaries would have known that he was a suicide, and the Metaphysical construction of the lines reinforces the idea of "too deep for human thought" (line 146). Thus, the horrible power of the disorder and its relationship to the productive life and eternal salvation of the sufferer is reinforced in a vignette as powerful as any in Pope's late epistles. Suicide for the eighteenth-century person was certain damnation because the person had committed a mortal sin, murder, and died too suddenly for repentance. Indeed, suicide was a sin and a crime; a person who failed in the attempt could be hanged for attempted murder. The powerful image of a *man* and one of the most renowned physicians in Great Britain succumbing to the spleen's power gives the poem a tragic turn and, again, argues against the identification of the condition with women. Reading backward, image after image is threatening. For example, although it has seldom been noticed, Finch is a powerful poet of the sea, and as she so often does, here too she uses it as a reflection of profound moods.

In myriad ways, large and small, *The Spleen* is representative of Finch's art. The masterful selection of form to amplify its content,[100] the skill in execution, and the precision of language and thought are typical of her work. The later

poetry of Pope is full of voices, dramatized versions of real or imaginative aspects of his personality, and *The Spleen* shares this quality and must also be heard and performed in order to experience its full effect and artistic excellence. Just as Pope's voices can generalize about humankind and suddenly dramatize a striking individual experience or personality, Finch's similar movement creates similar effects of immediacy and authority.

Done superbly in the fashionable irregular "Pindarian" ode, *The Spleen* was written when the form was still partaking of the exciting, "revolutionary" experimentation and discussion unleashed by Cowley's odes and Thomas Sprat's characterization of them.[101] How well Finch understood the Cowleyan form is evident. *The Spleen* has a "rational," argumentative movement that is yet exploratory and wide ranging in a pleasing variety of ways. Although the Pindaric ode in general and Finch's in particular have been called "loose" or even "wandering," that is inaccurate. As David Trotter points out, Cowley was "primarily concerned with discursion" (proceeding to a conclusion through reasoning) and with "the development of thought through associative links."[102] Cowley wrote that "the *Liberty* of them may incline a man to believe them easie to be composed, yet the undertaker will find it otherwise."[103] Significantly, as Ralph Cohen has demonstrated, eighteenth-century poetry was often structured incrementally rather than linearly, and Finch's is a fine example of this movement and the kind of searching intellectual argument that is, once understood, both economical and tight. Trotter has argued that Sprat and Cowley, through their experiences with the thinking of the Royal Society, to which both belonged, saw the Pindaric ode replicating a mode of knowledge that was rendered into a mode of argument.[104] As William Congreve noted about the Pindaric ode in 1706, there is "some secret Connexion, which tho' not always appearing to the Eye, never fails to communicate itself to the Understanding of the Reader.[105] His phrase "to the understanding of the Reader" captures Cohen's recognition of the incremental development of meaning. As we have seen, *The Spleen* spirals around the topic, building the reader's understanding and emotional appreciation, yet with a steady movement toward its sobering conclusion.

The questions of who and how spleen strikes lead into a reflective view of the human condition and its major struggles for achievement, for faith, and even for pleasant, congenial relationships with loved ones. The Pindaric ode fascinated Finch's contemporaries because it embraced modest subjects (Pindar's jockeys, Finch's spleen) and elevated them in ways that expounded their relationship to divine truth. The adjective most often applied to successful Pindaric odes by

Cowley and others was *sinewy*, and it is a significant word. Sinews, of course, are tendons, the tough, inelastic fibrous tissue that joins muscle with rough surfaces on bones. Bones sometimes break before tendons give way, and the vitality (response) and strength of muscles depend on them. Sinewy verse emphasizes connectives, strength, and boldness. Finch dares to build these things into her poem. Image after image is unusually strong, pulled from a variety of domains and developing the clandestine leap to spleen as a matter of life and (eternal) death. *The Spleen* is not an easy poem to read; few would call it beautiful, yet it is beautifully wrought. Most of it is in heroic couplets, but Alexandrines and heroic quatrains are used to good effect. Cowley says that the odes can "seem harsh and uncouth, *if* the just measures and cadences be not observed" (emphasis mine).[106] Finch, following Cowley, demands that her poem have voices, have the intelligent participation of her reader.

What this poem represented to Finch's contemporaries tells us a great deal about them *and* Finch's legacy. Tollet was insightful to see how good this poem is and how typical it is of Finch's best work. *The Spleen* is a statement of Finch's identity as a poet, and its clear, unhesitating depiction of "in the *Muses* Paths" "My Hand delights to trace unusual Things" replicates many other similar assertions of the poetic identity. In *To the Honourable Lady Worsley at Long-leate*, for instance, she expresses the desire to create "Transporting Figures n'ere expos'd before / Something to Please so moving and so new / As not our Denham or our Cowley knew" (Reynolds, 53). The poet Marilyn Hacker has said that "the formally ambitious poem is *also* the one where the point of view or narrative thrust is not merely 'original' but compelling."[107] Finch gives *The Spleen* both relentless narrative thrust and, especially when the autobiographical elements and the contemporary anxiety about the malady are recalled, a compelling point of view. Most significantly, from the moment of the publication of *The Spleen* Finch became for her contemporaries one of the poets who made the ode a poem about "a British subject in a Greek form" and contributed to remaking the ode into a distinctively British form, one that "becomes so British that even Greek relicts take the native hue."[108] Finch, like Pope, left later writers a model of what being a Poet means.

CHAPTER THREE

Women and Poetry in the Public Eye

> Decorum is the Child of Reason,
> Observing Order, Place, and Season.
> — JANE BRERETON

The women poets of the first decades of the eighteenth century were a diverse group, but one characterized by having leisure to write and early access to fine libraries. Even more than Finch, her contemporaries set the stage for the first flowering of British women's poetry. Some of them knew and encouraged one another. Mary Chudleigh and Elizabeth Thomas were friends, and several, including Sarah Fyge (Egerton), Elizabeth Singer (Rowe), and Chudleigh, belonged to circles of literary women; Rowe and Anne Finch knew each other, and Rowe read Finch's work in manuscript and encouraged her to continue writing.[1] Elizabeth Carter subscribed to the poetic works of Sarah Dixon, Jane Brereton, Mary Jones, Mary Masters, and Helen Maria Williams.[2] Jane Brereton and Judith Madan wrote poems and letters to each other, some commenting on Rowe's work, as did Brereton and Elizabeth Carter, who were introduced to each other by Edward Cave and then carried on a lively correspondence beginning in 1738. A few of them, including Chudleigh, Egerton, Thomas, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, knew Mary Astell, were influenced by her example, and versified some of her ideas (see, for example, Chudleigh's *To Almystrea*). Thomas refuted a range of prejudices against women by invoking Astell, "Adorned with wisdom, and replete with grace":

> Too long! indeed, has been our sex decried,
> And Ridiculed by men's malignant pride;
> . . . . . .
> When you, most generous heroine! stood forth,
> And showed your sex's aptitude and worth.
>
> (Lonsdale, 43)

Never married, childless, widowed young, separated from their husbands, or living largely in retirement, these women were all comfortably affluent or even wealthy. They knew that their role, in Egerton's words, was "to know much, and speak little." Modern experts on the individual women have reached conclusions such as Jeslyn Medoff's on Sarah Fyge Egerton (that she knew "something about" Greek mythology, geography, theology, history, and philosophy) and Margaret Ezell's on Chudleigh ("Chudleigh's poetry and prose display an impressive knowledge of classical philosophy, science, and history").[3] Elizabeth Singer Rowe's reading included Shakespeare, Molière, Nicholas Rowe, Otway, Addison, Gay, Thomson, Cibber, Fielding, Berkeley, Shaftesbury, Pascal, Law, and Cowley.[4] A precocious child "doted on by her father," Rowe learned French and Italian early and "easily,"[5] and she translated and imitated a number of Italian forms, including the sonnet, throughout her life. Elizabeth Tollet wrote a number of poems in Latin, including some musical translations of Psalms 29, 79, and 137. Her *Anne Boleyn to King Henry VIII* shows impressive knowledge of history, and poems such as *To Dr. James Sherard On the Hortus Elthamensis*, of botany and natural science.[6]

They often referred to their writing as "the innocent Amusement of a solitary life," as Chudleigh did in her preface to *Poems on Several Occasions* (1703). Sarah Dixon's preface to her own *Poems on Several Occasions* (1740) captures most of the themes common to their lives and to their positioning of themselves as poets: "As to the following Pieces the Reader is to know they were the Employment (an innocent, and, she thinks, no improper Employment) of a Youth of much Leisure. Some little Taste of Poetry, improved by some Reading, tempted our Author to try her Talents, for her own Amusement, and the Diversion of her Friends, in a Country Solitude." Yet these women knew themselves and each other to be dedicated to professional achievement of a high order and recognized it in their predecessors. These poets prepared the way for Carter, whose dedication was admired by many of their contemporaries, and for Mary Jones, who was willing to compare herself to Pope and publish in *An Epistle to Lady Bowyer*: "Well, but the joy to see my works in print! / My self too pictur'd in a Mezzo-Tint!"

Preparing for a new definition and space for women poets, they wrote in the genres respected in their time. Almost all of them wrote in all of the "Augustan" forms—odes, epistles, pastoral elegies and dialogues, philosophical meditations, lyrics, and classical and biblical imitations. Their poems share the tones, cadences, and language of this mainstream poetry. Literary historians have described the poetry of these decades in unflattering terms, and entire books, such as Blanford Parker's *Triumph of Augustan Poetics*, have been written to explain what is "today our most unread and, perhaps, unknowable body of texts."[7] Even more harshly, Bonamy Dobrée wrote, "It would seem safe to say that the writers of that time were not . . . stimulated by a heightened awareness of being," and their poetry, which "is not, to be sure, dull, . . . today fails to provoke any great depth of emotion or height of excitement."[8] Charles Peake, who is more sympathetic to the poetry of this period than many, notes the valuing of didactic poems that "show most clearly the current concept of the social usefulness of verse" and searches into the minor poetry of Swift and Prior for examples of originality. He especially appreciates poetry that "is based on the deflating misuse of the stock conventions of form, imagery and diction."[9] This preference is emblematic of the pervasive dissatisfactions with the era's poetry. Eric Rothstein summarizes, "Style . . . has puzzled readers. . . . They have reacted, often enough, with incredulity and contempt; or they have proposed theories to explain why eighteenth-century lovers of Shakespeare put up with such staid metaphors, such stilted diction, with largely standardized speakers who intone generalities, invoke personifications, call birds 'plumy people,' and dignify the unworthy, as in James Grainger's praise of 'lofty cassia,' a laxative."[10]

Recently John Sitter has argued that readers habitually "underestimate the poetic richness of many eighteenth-century works. . . . beneath the placid surfaces of eighteenth-century urbanity," and he insists intimidatingly that an unusual degree of "imagination and empathy" is required of readers of this poetry.[11] In "Questions in Poetics" he defends "rules," "decorum," and "neo-classicism" even as he admits that "through much of the modern era it has been assumed . . . that eighteenth-century poetry was inhibited by rigid theoretical principles and succeeded (when it did) by ignoring them."[12] It cannot be forgotten, however, that "the Augustans" produced beautiful, important poetry that is still read—and sung—today. No one would deny the mastery and reading pleasure of Dryden's *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*, Pope's *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, Addison's *The Spacious Firmament on High*, and Swift's birthday poems for Stella and *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*. As we shall see, the criticisms of Augustan poetry are equally unfair to

Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Sarah Fyge Egerton, Jane Brereton, and Mary, Lady Chudleigh.

Women wanted to write such poems; after all, they were what they read, enjoyed, respected, and recognized as the standard they had to meet to be recognized as poets. If poems Augustan in form, style, and content seem constricting, they, like any genre, are also enabling. Women's reading and cultivated taste provided them with models and aspirations. Some of them would surely say of their choices what the modern poet Marilyn Hacker did of hers:

> I choose to write metrically/formally; it's neither an imposition nor a philosophical/aesthetic conviction. I do it because it gives me pleasure; because (some have said) I do it well; because it's a challenge, and one I can meet. . . . Most of all, I do it because it sometimes takes the poem to unexpected places, because language itself then becomes the contrapuntal force, establishes the subtext.[13]

Although many of the poems by these eighteenth-century women are lightly gendered, in others language, form, and "Augustanism" itself generate powerful "contrapuntal force." Women varied from individual to individual in the extent to which they saw themselves accepted and practicing within the dominant tradition, and a woman who was firmly working within it at one stage of her career might set these forces in motion or depart radically from it at another stage. They were exploring the place of their poetry in their lives and in the larger society. And they knew, to invoke a quotation filtered through Alexei Kruchenkkh and Marjorie Perloff to Rachel DuPlessis, that "before us, the following things were demanded of language: clarity, purity, propriety, sonority, pleasure (sweetness for the ear), forceful expression (rounded, picturesque, tasty)."[14] Writing in these traditional forms on public subjects did not make a woman poet an "unacknowledged legislator of the world" or a seer of the "gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present."[15] To some extent all of them were claiming that women—they—had that right, but it is probable that there was always a sense of experimentation with content and form and with the place their voice would be assigned within cultural debates and discussions.

Of this generation, Elizabeth Singer Rowe and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu cast the longest shadows. Because their lives and work were so different, they expanded the possibilities for women greatly and enriched and complicated the poetic landscape. They and their sister poets offer additional answers to the question of what women wrote. In this chapter I begin with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who is the most daring example of the women poets joining public

political and literary debates. Exceptionally at home with the Horatian and Ovidian forms and with satiric English verse, she illustrates how genre could be subverted and enabling for women. In the next section I consider other examples of the ways women used poetry to join contemporary debates of great importance to their sex while working within traditional forms. In the final section I introduce Elizabeth Singer Rowe as she was known to her contemporaries and as an illustration of some of the most crippling problems critics of eighteenth-century women's poetry face.

Poetry as News and Critique

The urbane Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was anthologized more than any other woman in her century. Only five authors have more than fifteen poems in Dodsley's six-volume *Collection* of 1758; Lady Mary is the only woman, and she has twenty-three if the Town Eclogues are counted as individual poems. She held her place in the first volume of the 1770 edition, with additional poems in the fourth and sixth volumes.[16] She was a topical, sometimes biting poet who wrote in fashionable forms as well as classical ones and made both more fashionable. Some of her poems provided useful models for social commentary, but like Behn, she left a risky example for women who might want to join public- or literary-sphere controversies. Her *Court Poems* were published in 1716 without her permission by Edmund Curll, with editions in 1719 and 1726. Dodsley and the *London Magazine* published more of her poetry,[17] and the publication of her letters in 1763 increased her renown. As is consistent with her class, she wrote fashionable, occasional poetry and was often in poetic dialogue with friends and other poets. Her modern editors say that she "had the habit of dashing off verse extempore,"[18] but she was also a serious, experimental poet who, like Finch and Chudleigh, saw her writing as an integrated, essential part of her identity. Her poetry had serious admirers. Elizabeth Tollet published one of the popular triumvirate poems about her after reading *Verses written in the Chiosk* in Anthony Hammond's *New Miscellany of Original Poems, Translations, and Imitations* (1720), saying that in it she combined Orpheus's and Sappho's moving poetry with the power of Helen's eyes.[19]

It would be nice to be able to say that today we are beginning to understand her considerable poetic virtuosity, but that would not be accurate. In addition to songs, ballads, fables, mock forms, and theater verse, she wrote meditations, Horatian and Ovidian epistles, odes, and formal verse satires. In her own time her

most frequently anthologized poems were the Town Eclogues,[20] *The Lover. A Ballad*, and *The Lady's Resolve*, usually with one of the answers by a well-known male poet. Dodsley and Colman-Thornton kept the *Epilogue to "Mary Queen of Scots"* in the public eye. Written for a play never finished, it compares Mary and Elizabeth and recommends Elizabeth's conduct in witty, cynical lines:

> If you will Love, love like Eliza then,
> Love for Amusement like those Traitors, Men.
> Think that the Pastime of a Leisure Hour
> She favour'd oft — but never shar'd her Power.
> (H&G, 241)

Thus, just as Finch had been styled a writer of fables and *The Spleen*, Lady Mary was contracted into a Restoration-style wit of the war between the sexes. The *London Magazine*, for instance, published *Suppos'd to be wrote on a Captain's Picture at Vanloe's* (1738), *A Ballad, To the Tune of the Irish Howl* (1749), *A Man in Love*, *An Answer to a Love Letter*, and *An Answer to a Lady who advised Retirement* (all 1750) before printing in July and September of 1750 her lovely *Hymn to the Moon* and *Verses written in a Garden*. Only during the Romantic period did *Hymn to the Moon* became a common choice of anthologizers. Today *The Lover. A Ballad* is the only one of these poems to retain its popularity; at most, one of the eclogues, unfortunately almost invariably *Saturday. The Small Pox*, is selected along with one of her Ovidian or Horatian epistles and a short, witty poem such as *A Receipt to Cure the Vapors*, *Verses written in a Garden*, or *The Resolve*. Such groupings limit our understanding of her but do not badly misrepresent her work.

Curll printed parts of *Monday: Roxana, Or the Drawing Room* and *Friday: The Toilette*, *Lydia* (written with Gay) and all of *Thursday: The Bassette Table: Smilinda, Cardelia* as *Court Poems*, and they set the tone and expectations for Montagu's verse. To be fair, they catch her distinctive voice and wry, clear-sighted understanding of fashionable posturing and human nature. Montagu knew Addison and Arbuthnot, and at an influential time in her life she enjoyed close friendships with Gay and Pope. Mock eclogues were a popular satiric form when she wrote hers,[21] and some, including Jonathan Swift's *Description of a City Shower*, remain standard selections in today's undergraduate anthologies. Given her temperament and her friendships, Montagu was naturally drawn to this spin-off of pastoral poetry. Swift's *A Town Eclogue. Scene the Royal Exchange* (1710) and Gay's *Shepherd's Week* (1714), a play on Spenser's great *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579), are serious poems that began to make the eclogue "a genre to be defied and re-used,

remodelled"[22] and, consequently, one of the most socially significant forms of poetry. Montagu's are clearly creatively intertextual poems. Sharing structures of feeling and the same literary public sphere produces delightful comparisons and contrasts. Pope's protagonists in *The Rape of the Lock* are trophy collectors, for instance, and so are Montagu's pastoral competitors in *Tuesday*. *Thursday* turns on equating love and cards, and humor in *Monday: Roxana* depends in part on the same kind of judgmental zeugmas that Pope used in *The Rape of the Lock:* "Such heavy thought lay brooding in her Breast / Not her own Chairmen with more weight oppress'd" (H&G, 182). "Was it for this, that I these Roses wear, / For this, new set my Jewells for my Hair?" echoes both *The Rape of the Lock* and Gay's town eclogue *Araminta* (H&G 183nn7–8).

Both the card table and the toilette figure prominently in *The Rape of the Lock*, but Montagu's *Thursday* and *Friday* are wholly original and actuate the eclogue form's potential for social critique. Lydia in *Friday* is thirty-five and, unlike Belinda, who is in her sought-after prime, is brooding at her dressing table over her lost youth and her unsatisfying affair with a married man. Montagu (and Gay) shared Swift's harsh view of the piety of her contemporaries, and Lydia exposes a jaded opinion of churchgoing and a look at what her attendance would signal:

> At Chappell shall I wear the Morn away?
> Who there appears at these unmodish hours,
> But ancient Matrons with their frizled Tours,
> And grey religious Maids? My presence there
> Amidst that sober Train, would own Dispair;
> Nor am I yet so old, nor is my Glance
> As yet fix'd wholly on Devotion's Trance.
>
> (H&G, 199)

She decides to shop instead, and a new hat and her clever maid's compliments revive her: "How charmingly you look! so bright! so fair!" She hurries off to a play. Embedded in this poem are biting comments on the double standard and women's willingness "to bear Neglect / And force a smile, not daring to Suspect." Her poetry would increasingly take as its subjects romantic delusions about gender relationships and the disappointments of marriage.

All of Montagu's eclogues are highly topical and use the conventions of dramatic dialogues or soliloquies in a *locus amoenus* (pleasant place) at least as well as her better-known contemporaries. More concerned with the relations between the sexes and the situation of women than they, she is willing to be shocking. *Wednesday: The Tête à Tête* is a dialogue between lovers who spar for so long that

the husband returns, frustrating their sexual gratification. The acerbic and hilarious *Tuesday. St. James's Coffee-house* is a boasting contest between two men competing to establish who has been granted the most risqué favor from a lady: "I drunk Bohea in Coelia's dressing room, / Warm from her bed. . . ." This ironic shepherd's contest is as entertaining "Augustan" satiric verse as the best of the period. The eclogues often end with a surprise; *Tuesday* concludes with the utterly deflating lines, "After a Conquest so important gain'd / Unrivall'd Patch in ev'ry Ruelle [receptions in ladies' bedrooms] reign'd" (H&G, 189).

Later women imitated Montagu's eclogues as vehicles for gender and social satire. Ann Murry, for example, wrote three Town Eclogues. Her *Tête à Tête* is between a married couple and ends with a revelatory discovery in the manner of Montagu's. The fashionable couple animatedly discuss their plans for the day, the gossip in the newspapers, and their shared distaste for the country life. Suddenly Sir Charles reveals that he needs to "put m'Estate to nurse" and repair his fortune by fleeing to France. Moreover, he confesses that the domestic life and the noise of his children are unbearable and concludes, "The remedy you'll gain in legal course, / A sep'rate Stipend, or a kind Divorce."[23] Reviewers of Murry's book singled out the eclogues for praise and noted the pleasures of her "colloquial compositions" and sharp observations, both qualities recognized in Montagu's eclogues.

Montagu was fascinated by the uses of Ovidian forms and Horatian epistles, satires, and odes and engaged with Pope's employment of them.[24] She frequently used them to make political and social statements, and they often have their inspirations in contact with people or events. Montagu showed an early interest in the epistle, which, as Margaret Doody says, "is a major idea in poetry" for the period, and imitations of Ovid's *Heroides* were enormously popular.[25] At age twelve she wrote *Julia to Ovid*, whose emotionally overwrought expressions so typical of the period are indisputable evidence of her precocious understanding of the form: "When sick with Sighs to absent Ovid given, / I tire with Vows the unrelenting Heaven, / Drown'd in my Tears . . ." (H&G, 176). As a mature poet she turned the form on its head. The *Epistle from Arthur G[ra]y to Mrs M[urra]y* and the *Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge] to her Husband* are nothing short of subversive protests against the popularity of the innumerable poems written from the point of view of a miserable, distraught, deserted, helpless, highly emotional woman. In these poems she casts two infamous sets of "lovers" alongside such famous subjects as Eloisa and Abelard and Sappho and Phaon.

The *Epistle from Arthur G[ra]y* appeared in all of the major eighteenth-century collections after being circulated in manuscript for some time. This strange poem is about a servant, carrying pistols and a sword, entering the bedroom of Griselda

Murray. She overpowered him, summoned help, and he was tried and condemned to death (but transported at the Murray family's request instead).[26] Gray is feminized into the tragic victim of an Ovidian epistle. The opening lines parody Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard:* "Read, Lovely Nymph, and tremble not to read, / I have no more to wish, nor you to dread" (H&G, 221). Like his sister sufferers, he remembers fondly the happy time when the lovers were together; unlike them, however, he kisses letters Murray gave him to deliver rather than letters she sent him. "How pleas'd, how proud, how fond was I to wait, / Present the sparkling Wine," he says. *His* "wretched Education flys," and he is swept away by jealousy. "But oh the torment not to be express'd, / . . . / When my Great Rivals in Embroidery Gay, / Sat by your Side, or led you from the Play" (222). Because the lovers of most of the *Heroides* were noble or even royal, the "world" was often something to be given or given up. In a hilarious line Montagu has Gray say, "Think, when I held the Pistol to your Breast, / Had I been of the World's large rule possess'd, / That World had then been yours . . ." (224). The conclusion remains true to the form by describing him as hoping only for her pity, which would mean he would not "die in vain." The incident was described in unusual detail in the newspapers, and the story of the footman carried away by the beauty of his mistress seems to have appealed long after the incident was forgotten. This poem has Montagu's sure satiric and parodic technique. Like many of her poems, it shows her keen observation of class implications, hypocrisy, and euphemistic conventions.

The *Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge]* is a far more serious work and is one of her most powerful statements about the sex-gender system, one that presents her engagement with current events and their implications for women. William Yonge, a notorious libertine already separated from his wife Mary, sued her lover and won £1,500 with costs, and then divorced her. In this poem written after the sensational, much-reported trials for criminal conversation and then divorce Montagu adapts the Ovidian complaint of the abandoned lover into a condemnation of the injustices Mary would now suffer and of the double standard. As the dramatized Mary says, *he* is "Beneath the Shelter of the Law" and she is "dragg'd into Light." The poem is prose-y and to the point:

> This wretched Out-cast, this abandon'd Wife,
> Has yet this Joy to sweeten shamefull Life,
> By your mean Conduct, infamously loose,
> You are at once m'Accuser, and Excuse.
>
> (H&G, 232)

Assessing the difference between the opinion that will be publicly expressed and the judgment that fair-minded people will actually hold, she rewrites the Ovidian convention of contrasting "rational" behavior with the understanding that lovers, those who have "felt them most," have:

> My hapless Case will surely Pity find
> From every Just and reasonable Mind,
> When to the final Sentence I submit,
> The Lips condemn me, but their Souls acquit.
>
> (232)

Moreover, Montagu places Mrs. Yonge (and other wives in similar situations) before the new bar of justice of public opinion in the same way that novelists were converting readers into judges and creating a literary public sphere that would bring previously private-sphere issues into discussion. The poem summarizes brilliantly how many eighteenth-century women (but not Montagu, who eloped)[27] came to be in unhappy situations:

> If sighs have gain'd or force compell'd our Hand,
> Deceiv'd by Art, or urg'd by stern Command,
> What ever Motive binds the fatal Tye,
> The Judging World expects our Constancy.
> . . . . . .
> Defrauded Servants are from Service free,
> A wounded Slave regains his Liberty.
> For Wives ill us'd no remedy remains,
> To daily Racks condemn'd, and to eternal Chains.
>
> (230–31)

Numerous lines echo Ovidian sentiments but show an active rather than helpless sufferer, especially in dramatizing the choice Mary Yonge had allegedly made after separating from her husband because of his adultery and other cruelties:

> And I have born (o what have I not born!)
> The pang of Jealousie, th' Insults of Scorn.
> Weary'd at length, I from your sight remove,
> And place my Future Hopes, in Secret Love.
> In the gay Bloom of glowing Youth retir'd. . . .
>
> (231)

Her line beginning "And I have born" echoes the lines of Catherine, Countess of Anglesey, the defendant in an earlier sensational divorce trial. Four MPs chosen by the earl were sent to "persuade her to return" to her husband, and, were she to refuse, she was ordered to write her reasons. Later, under interrogation before the Lords about her stubbornness, this woman, who had been locked up, pinched on the neck and breast so violently that a doctor was called, and otherwise abused, finally snapped out, "I bore and bore and will bear no more."[28] Just as the *Heroides* established a line of deserted, lovesick women, Montagu is intertextually alluding to a line of wronged, divorced women and of wives bartered or tricked into unhappy marriages.

Many of Montagu's poems criticize the disappointments of marriage, and there is a decidedly cynical tone to most of them. In *Written ex tempore on the Death of Mrs. Bowes* twelve tight lines of heroic couplets sketch the disappointments of marriage. Among them:

> You had not yet the fatal Change deplor'd,
> The tender Lover, for th'imperious Lord,
> Nor felt the Pangs that jealous Fondness brings,
> Nor wept the Coldness from Possession springs.
> (H&G, 233)

Loneliness and fading love are common themes in married women's poetry, but Montagu stands out for the precision of her language and the vividness of the voices she creates. A more ordinary poem is Mehetabel Wright's *Address to her Husband* (1730?), which also describes what a husband ought to be: "My guide, and husband ever kind, / My sovereign master, best of friends," but the poem is really centered in the question, "tell me *why* I cease to please." In this rather abject poem Wright nevertheless insists that she is "wronged" and "will not brook contempt from thee!" (Lonsdale, 112–13). Because of their immediacy and specificity Montagu's descriptions of authoritarian, cold, and neglectful husbands, like this one, often seem to be witty, detached dramatizations of her own situation as summarized in a November 1714 letter to Wortley: "You write seldom and with so much indifference as shows you hardly think of me at all. . . . Own to me your Inconstancy, and upon my word I will give you no more trouble about it. . . . If your Inclination is gone, I had rather never receive a Letter from you, then one which in leiu [*sic*] of comfort for your absence gives me a pain even beyond it."[29] Her poetry is full of social and moral comment, as these poems are, and some of her wittiest, most biting poems are on human nature, gender relations, courtship practices, romantic delusions, and the marriage market.[30] *The*

Lady's Resolve and *The Gentleman's Answer*, which were routinely printed with *The Lover* in the eighteenth century, are equally admonitory and moral.

Montagu's Ovidian epistles tend to deal with the private sphere, although the implications for the public are implied. The Horatian poems, like those of so many of her contemporaries, are public-sphere poems that use private conduct to reveal consistent personality patterns that qualify or disqualify the individual for public trust. In many cases they go on to set up a microcosm/macrocosm argument about the state of the nation and its leadership. The *Epistle [to Lord Bathurst]*, for instance, emphasizes Bathurst's inconstancy in relationships, private undertakings, and public interests. Montagu begins with his flagging interest in his great house and grounds and then, evoking the century's dedication to public service, writes,

> A Good Man owes his Country to be great,
> Should act abroad the high distinguish'd Part,
> Or shew at least the purpose of his Heart;
> With Thoughts like these, the shining Court you seek
> Full of new projects for — allmost a Week.
>
> (H&G, 243)

The emblem of his character, however, is his fickleness regarding women. Montagu shows him pursuing a woman only to be immediately distracted as another comes into view. Her metaphoric lines are detailed and especially pleasing because they rework a familiar image imaginatively:

> Thus on the Sands of Affric's burning plains
> However deeply made no long Impress remains,
> The lightest Leaf can leave its figure there,
> The strongest Form is scatter'd by the Air.
>
> (243)

Montagu treats Bathurst as a figure whose prominence made his character and conduct a matter of public concern. *P[ope] to Bolingbroke* attacks Pope's "Person, Morals, and Family," as Pope said. In devastating Horatian lines, she has Pope marvel admiringly at Bolingbroke's arrogance at the collapse of Tory power upon the accession of George I, which, for instance, soon saw Robert Harley and Francis Atterbury in the Tower:

> Recorded be that memorable hour,
> When, to elude exasperated Pow'r,
> With blushless front you durst your Friends betray,

> Advise the whole confed'racy to stay,
> And brave the danger of th' enquiring day,
> While, with sly Courage, you ran brisk away.
> (H&G, 281)

In the epistle, Pope is made to convict himself, and he comes across as less than a man ("All I can do is flatter, lie, and cheat") even as he exposes his and Bolingbroke's shared conceit, his own in lines like these: "My self am mov'd to high poetick rage / (The Homer, and the Horace of the Age)" (282–83). Montagu is playing off of Pope's image of his own poetic greatness and his Horatian Satire 2.1, which includes these lines:

> There, my Retreat the best Companions grace,
> Chiefs, out of War, and Statesmen, out of Place.
> There *St. John* mingles with my friendly Bowl,
> The Feast of Reason and the Flow of Soul:
> . . . . . .
> *Envy* must own, I live among the Great,
> No Pimp of Pleasure, and no Spy of State.
> (lines 125–28, 133–34)

Montagu never loses the sense of national context, and the poem ends with a comparison with the time of Henry VIII, when Bolingbroke would have been beheaded for treason and Pope scourged "in the Porter's Lodge." Montagu knew Pope's poem well enough to remember his "Could Laureate *Dryden* Pimp and Fry'r engage, / Yet neither *Charles* nor *James* be in a Rage?" (Satire 2.1). She could, then, go him one better with her harsh image of how Henry VIII would react to Pope and his cronies. Pope's poem ends with a flurry of references to England's kings and a transparently false claim that he merely writes "grave *Epistles* . . . / Such as . . . a *Bishop* write" (lines 151–52). As surely as Pope's Horatian satires indicted his time by comparing it with a nobler past, Montagu does the same by having Pope depict himself and Bolingbroke laughing "at Justice, Gratitude and Law."

Women are famous for taking texts by men and responding, "Not *that* way, *this* way." To do so on the highest of political levels as Montagu does here, however, is relatively unusual. By the time she wrote these poems, she was what Valerie Rumbold calls her, "a writer, a wit, and a politician."[31] Oddly enough, but without question, she and Pope made each other better. Her *Verses Address'd to the Imitator of Horace* gave rise to his magisterial *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, he said in his

"Advertisement." Back and forth they challenged each other as they refined their sense of the poet's duty in society. Her assurance in these Horatian poems is remarkable for a woman. In *Verses Address'd to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace* she dares to be the arbiter defining Horace's satire even as she judges Pope's:

> *Horace* can laugh, is delicate, is clear;
> You, only coarsely rail, or darkly sneer:
> His Style is elegant, his Diction pure,
> Whilst none thy crabbed Numbers can endure;
> Hard as thy Heart, and as thy Birth obscure.
> . . . . . .
> *Satire* shou'd like a polish'd Razor keen,
> Wound with a Touch, that's scarcely felt or seen,
> Thine is an Oyster-Knife, that hacks and hews;
> The Rage, but not the Talent to Abuse.
> (H&G, 266–67)

She slips in—like razor cuts—a few devastating *ad hominem* touches about his physique and his class and concludes with the vivid, concrete metaphor of the knives, again redolent with class connotations.[32] She feels free to parody Pope's own lines, turning them deftly back on him and even managing to parody his tone in ways that expose their pretense and, in her opinion, hypocrisy. In *P[ope] to Bolingbroke* she has Pope say, "We only tread the Path that's mark'd by heaven" (H&G, 283), a tone and stance he strikes often, as he sheds all responsibility for his satiric bent in a dazzling variety of ways. Montagu exaggerates content but captures the tone admirably. In Epistle 2.2, for instance, Pope writes, "That God of Nature, who, within us still, / Inclines our Action" (lines 280–81), and in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, "Why did I write? what sin to me unknown / Dipt me in Ink, my Parents, or my own?" (lines 125–26).

In this group of poems are the famous exchanges with Swift as well as Pope. Donna Landry has pointed out, and we have seen, that Montagu "inscribes herself therein as both a bitter rival and their social superior" and that "class power supplies magisterial scorn for the very poets from whom she derives such excitement, such irritation, and such literary vitality."[33] Her reaction to them is contextualized by that long central section of the *Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge]*. She presents the injustice of the way an individual woman's intelligence and situation can be completely obscured or even obliterated by opinions about the sex and masterfully alternates tones of defiance, resignation, worldliness, and sadness.

Yet Grundy has rightly pointed out that "Pope provided Montagu with her poetic vocabulary of indignation."[34] Their shared caustic observations on fashionable society and the insults carelessly dealt out to women, Catholics, and the physically different, as well as their devastating use of heroic couplets and Horatian forms, emphasize their similarities. These poems, of course, make Montagu an unacceptable model for most women, even though, like Egerton and Chudleigh, they now refused to let printed, misogynist characterizations of their sex pass. Her personal, explicit invectives strike some critics even today as lower, more personal, and dirtier than Pope's, and they certainly violate standards of decency and literary engagement. Montagu's example was also unattainable, however. The precision of her language, the skill of her prosody, the assurance of her class and position, and her willingness to engage on such a personal level are an unusual combination in men, not to mention women.

Laurence Lerner has observed that the content of Montagu's poems is "anarchic" even as the "elegant couplets" are "scrupulously law-abiding."[35] In fact, both see the world in which they live as anarchic, and their verse as a contrasting model of order and reform both in content and in form. Just as they refined their statements about the duty of the Poet, they sharpened their portraits of anarchy and decline. In this project gender makes enormous differences. Pope locates causes in groups of political men, while Montagu incriminates patriarchy and its institutions almost *in toto.* They express their superiority in content and form even as they inscribe a masked counterdiscourse of personal and public hurt and rage. The inequalities of gender and class are consistent subjects, and Montagu is particularly good at quick, scathing snapshots of current attitudes, usually clothed in polite language. In the ballad *Virtue in Danger*, for example, the fictionalized Griselda Murray says, " 'Tis not for scoundrell Scrubs to wish / To tast their Master's Meat."[36]

Just as she adapted the classical forms for distinctively British purposes, she played off of English Renaissance poetry, reaccentuating its forms, tones, and themes to serve her political purposes. *The Lover* is a good example and deserves its lasting reputation. In the tradition of the lady's answer to an amorous, seducing man, the lady explains her refusal,

> I am not as cold as a Virgin in Lead,
> Nor is Sunday's Sermon so strong in my Head.
> I know but too well how Time flys along,
> That we live but few Years, and yet fewer are young.
>
> (H&G, 235)

Deliberately bringing to mind Marlowe's and Raleigh's famous *carpe diem* lyrics, she has the lady continue, "Oh! was there a Man. . . ." From that point the poem lists the characteristics that women wish for, such as "Let the Friend and the Lover be handsomly mix'd, / In whose tender Bosom my Soul might confide, / Whose kindness can sooth me, whose Councel cou'd guide" (236). In this poem (and many others) Montagu is willing both to reveal her heart and to flirt with the rakish language and raffish enjoyment of the Restoration:

> But when the long hours of Public are past
> And we meet with Champaign and a Chicken at last,
> May every fond Pleasure that hour endear;
> Be banish'd afar both Discretion and Fear!
> Forgetting or scorning the Airs of the Croud,
> He may cease to be formal, and I to be proud,
> Till lost in the Joy, we confess that we live,
> And he may be rude, and yet I may forgive.
>
> (235–36)

This verse juxtaposes the poses based on gender roles that theatrical couples struck with the domestic pleasures of eating, drinking, and sex. The poem ends with a witty and learned reference to Ovid:

> Before such persuers the nice Virgin flys;
> And as Ovid has sweetly in Parables told,
> We harden like Trees, and like Rivers are cold.
>
> (236)

Alluding to the stories of Daphne and Arethusa, she imagines the rake and fop encountering a choosey, discriminating woman who is hard, impenetrable as an oak, and cold, unmoved by their arts. This poem is decidedly from a woman's point of view, yet it has the tone, wit, stylish use of language, and verse form of Prior, Gay, and the wits at their best.

After Montagu, many women wrote witty descriptions of the ideal male's virtues. Mary Barber's *Conclusion of a Letter to the Rev. Mr. C——* begins with a mocking list of what men want in a wife ("May I have a wife that will dust her own floor," "That shall, when I'm dressing, attend like a valet; / Then to the kitchen, and study my palate"). The next section is a rival list of what a really good wifely helpmeet would be like, and the conclusion is the ideal husband: "A husband's first praise is a Friend and Protector: / Then change not these titles for Tyrant and Hector."[37] Her lines have a witty bite, an apt portrayal of commonplace opinions, and an

early, detailed vision of the companionate marriage. More like Montagu's cynicism and championing of women's intelligence is Elizabeth Hands's poem *A Song:*

> We are not so easily led by the nose,
> Though with coxcombs we chatter, and flirt with the beaux;
> Yet seldom or never our hearts they command,
> Though sometimes through pity we give them our hand.
>
> A tony, a coxcomb, a beau, or a clown,
> Well season'd with money, may sometimes go down;
> But these in our hearts we can never revere;
> The worthy man only can hold a place there.[38]

Montagu's quick wit and epigrammatic skill were particularly suited for writing fashionable lyrics. The anacreontic *Receipt to Cure the Vapours*, popular since its first publication in Dodsley's 1748 *Collection*, comes from the same body of attitudes toward women's moods as Finch's *The Spleen* but is completely different in tone:

> I.
> WHY will Delia thus retire,
> And idly languish life away?
> While the sighing crowd admire,
> 'Tis too soon for hartshorn tea:
> II.
> All those dismal looks and fretting
> Cannot Damon's life restore;
> Long ago the worms have eat him,
> You can never see him more.
> III.
> Once again consult your toilette,
> In the glass your face review:
> So much weeping soon will spoil it,
> And no spring your charms renew.
> IV.
> I, like you, was born a woman,
> Well I know what vapours mean:
> The disease, alas! is common;
> Single, we have all the spleen.

V.

All the morals that they tell us,
Never cur'd the sorrow yet:
Chuse, among the pretty fellows,
One of honour, youth and wit.

VI.

Prithee hear him every morning,
At the least an hour or two;
Once again at night returning—
I believe the dose will do.[39]

Irreverently claiming for women the treatment recommended for men, and perhaps bouncing off of Pope's *Sober Advice from Horace*,[40] Montagu's poem is less profound and ambitious than his, but it is a delightful contribution to an important strain of English poetry.

Alexander Pope copied the five eclogues that Montagu alone wrote into an elegant volume, and in 1718, when she returned from Turkey, she added a poem to the volume.[41] Worthy of the company of the fine eclogues, *Constantinople*, or as Lonsdale titles it, *Verses Written in the Chiosk of the British Palace*, is a beautiful nature poem written in smooth heroic couplets. Her use of alliteration is especially good as she contrasts England, "The wither'd woods grown white with hoary frost," to Constantinople, "But as the Parent rose decayes and dyes, / The infant buds with brighter collours rise." She sets the perspective from a window overlooking the mountains, the city, and the monuments: "The Labour'd Pillars that their Triumphs told / (Vain Monuments of Men that once were great!) / Sunk undistinguish'd in one common Fate!" (H&G, 208). From an early age, she filled her poetry with contrasts between beautiful nature description and vivid renderings of the bustle of the city and the court.[42] The poem opens beautifully into a meditation on the larger theme of the passing of empires. *Verses written in a Garden* characterizes society by "censorious Eyes," as Finch had done, and contrasts the "Moral Maxims" and "Religious Rules" as less effective than the lessons from God's book, nature. Montagu's original turn of mind and ability to write lines worth pondering strengthen the conclusion:

The great Creator's happy Hand
Virtue and Pleasure ever blends,
In vain the Church and Court have try'd
Th'united Essence to divide;

> Alike they find their wild mistake,
> The Pedant Preist [*sic*], and Giddy Rake.
> (H&G, 301)

Because of the variety of perspectives and opinions, it seems clear that although these poems often have immediate contexts, they are also self-conscious poetic experiments. The editors of Montagu's poetry have observed of her adaptation of Nicolas Boileau's tenth satire that "as an attack on women, it stands out oddly among her works" (H&G, 210). Yet it seems to me that *A Satyr* presents another perspective on the disappointed hopes about marriage and approaches an exercise in the mastery of poetic art. Its descriptions of women are more than balanced by those in the Ovidian *Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge].* In the imitation of Boileau, the husband wishes "the solid Comfort of a Wife, / To pass in peace My now declineing years." What follow are the standard depictions of extremes—the profligate gambling wife and the miserly one who scrimps painfully on fire and food; the hyperactive termagant and the perpetually sickly whiner. These criticisms of women would, of course, be made in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* and attributed to their educations and social mores, both targets of Montagu's.

The range of Montagu's poetry is great, and her poems show a willingness to adapt and extend the Augustan and satiric modes of her young womanhood. Perhaps most importantly, she contributes to the reshaping of poetry as a means of conveying news and editorial opinion (one only has to think of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*) for a new century. The *Epistle from Arthur G[ra]y*, poems on Lord Hervey, and poems such as *An Elegy on Mrs. T[hompso]n* use news as a springboard and, as Dryden's and Defoe's poetry did, create more news and editorial comment on public events, social mores, and the behavior of the prominent. By refusing, as Finch had also done, to flinch before the power of a poet like Pope, Montagu left a record for the eighteenth century and for us of the ways women engage, correct, revise, and move away from influences that have often been seen as overwhelming or even stifling. Perhaps her most revolutionary contribution was seeing that "the maxims that pass for the truth of human experience, and the encoding of that experience in literature, are organizations, when they are not fantasies, of the dominant culture."[43] In poems like the *Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge]* and others on marriage she treated practices as fantasies, and in the Horatian satires she exposed the dominant structures of feeling that maintained them. Montagu, like Finch, did not shrink from describing the system as a sys-

tem, an "organization," or from attempting to mitigate "the brilliance of its barbaric effects"[44] in polished, Augustan verse.

The Woman Question

Montagu and the women poets of her generation were working within an especially vigorous discussion of the nature and appropriate place, public and domestic, of women. The 1690s had set the terms and tone of the debate, and all of the women's work is affected to some extent by it. These poets joined the women novelists in contesting representations of their sex, in writing critiques of the conventions of courtship, and, like Montagu, in demanding more from men and relationships. Writing somewhat earlier than she, they were the last generation of women poets to claim love as their special province. Like the women novelists at the beginning of the century, Egerton, for instance, took love as her chief subject and, like them, in her own time was praised for her understanding of love and the human heart. A typical tribute was John Froud's to her in *The Grove: or, the Rival Muses* (1701): "Not *Behn* herself with all her softest Art / So well could talk of Love, or touch the Heart."[45] In her dedication to *Poems on Several Occasions* Egerton defends women's writing on love: "Our Sex is confin'd to so narrow a Sphere of Action, that things of greater Consequences seldom fall within our Notices; so that Love seems the only proper Theme (if any can be so) for a Woman's Pen." She wrote a variety of pleasing lyrics, epistles, and dialogues. When she is at her best, there is a driving tension to her lines, and the conventional thought that opens *To One who said I must not Love* is a good example:

> Bid the fond Mother spill her Infants Blood,
> The hungry Epicure not think of Food;
> Bid the *Antartick* touch the *Artick* Pole:
> When they obey I'll force Love from my Soul.[46]

Egerton's *Poems* (1703) include several critiques of courtship rituals, patriarchal marriage structures, and the acceptability of male rakish, libertine behavior—all concerns of women's novels of the next decade. Her own romantic history often plays a part, sometimes turned into acerbic generalizations in the ways that Montagu's had. The daughter of a London apothecary and city councilman, the then Sarah Fyge unwillingly married Edward Field, an attorney, when she was still a teenager. His death left her economically secure, yet she soon married the Reverend Thomas Egerton, and their stormy life led to divorce proceedings.[47]

She can be most easily compared to the novelists, and she knew Delarivière Manley well.[48]

The subject of nature versus custom came out of the feminist controversies of the 1690s and remained a center of discussion in "the woman question" for a long time. "Custom," both customary rules for women's conduct and entrenched opinions about women's nature and abilities, formed chafing hobbles for women. Activist women sought to reduce the number of limitations that sprung from the category "nature," thereby allowing women to be defined as having greater capacities and therefore greater opportunities. They could hope to change customs but not "nature." Egerton is well aware of custom's opinions *and* rules. In *The Liberty* she asks, "Shall I be one, of those obsequious Fools, / That square there [*sic*] lives, by Customs scanty Rules; / . . . / That all the business of my life must be, / Foolish, dull Trifling, Formality."[49] *The Liberty* begins with a history of the ways women are constructed into obedience and silence. With powerful synecdoches such as the "Commanding clock," she catches how regulated every aspect of women's lives were. In her hands the heroic couplets become a jackhammer piling up images of surveillance and discipline.

> Some boast their Fetters, of Formality,
> Fancy they ornamental Bracelets be,
> I'm sure their [*sic*] Gyres, and Manacles to me.
> To their dull fulsome Rules, I'd not be ty'd,
> For all the Flattery that exalts their Pride.
>
> (20)

These lines expose how the sex-gender system works. Egerton transforms the "light" fetters into gyres and manacles, respectively heavy restraints for the legs and feet and the wrists. Flattered into believing that feminine constriction is a light ornament, a sign of accomplishments, women in her opinion become collaborators with the men who embody custom. With her metaphors of shackles and entrapment, she shows the effect of custom not only on behavior but on the mind itself.

This strong sense of the power of "custom" and that it is not "nature," either the sex's or the individual's, is found in the work of most of this generation of poets and helped establish the terms of the poetic theme. Chudleigh, for instance, wrote in the preface to her *Poems on Several Occasions:* "Those who are govern'd by Opinion, inslav'd to Custom, and Vassals to their Humors, are Objects of Pity" (Ezell, 44). Egerton listed women's roles in *The Emulation:* "The

Nurse, the Mistress, Parent and the Swain."[50] Mary Leapor wrote in 1751, "Sires, Brothers, Husbands, and commanding Sons, / The Sceptre claim; and ev'ry Cottage brings / A long Succession of Domestic Kings."[51] As in Montagu's poetry, the customs and beliefs that constructed husbands came in for the most examination. Elizabeth Thomas, for instance, wrote of marriage in her *Epistle to Clemena:* "Equal's the contract, equal are the vows, / Yet Custom different licences allows." This poem, like many others, describes the husband's besotted, rude, arbitrary, neglectful conduct in a series of vivid anecdotes ("Sated at last with fulsome lies and wine, / Nefario swears aloud, 'Tis dinner-time") and ubiquitously repeated complaints ("Dead drunk he falls, and snoring lies supine") (Lonsdale, 35–36). As Donna Landry notes, Leapor and the other women poets were not inventing new arguments but transposing such insights into poetry with striking polemical clarity.[52] Although many are personal lists of grievances, they unite in a sustained critique of "custom" and the unexamined practices that made their lives miserable and stunted.

Marilyn Hacker has pointed out that "journeyman" poetry is the result of "predictable language, structure, point of view, tone" rather than a "predictable" or even overdone subject. "Often enough," she writes, "the formally ambitious poem is *also* the one where the point of view or narrative thrust is not merely 'original' but compelling."[53] Finch, Thomas, Chudleigh, and other women poets had said the same things; each writes such gripping poems. For example, the sustained anger of Egerton's *Emulation* is unusual, but she uses the rigidly controlling form to demonstrate the power of her mind and construct an argument intended to be a witty *coup de grâce*. Claiming, as the other poets did, women's equal intelligence and ability to learn, she concludes the poem with a clever call to arms based on the unequal balance between the "ten celestial Females" who "govern Wit" and the two male gods of wit, Apollo and Mercury. The arrangement of the alexandrine in the question at lines 29–31 and its answer in the following couplet suggest her ability to use the most popular metrical form to good purpose. In *To the Queen* and *The Liberty* Egerton pledges to make "bolder Sallies" beyond "the nice Order of my Sex."[54]

Egerton, like Chudleigh, uses poetry to explore human happiness, for the species and for herself. For all of these women, poetry was a form of life-writing, and each insisted on a personal, inviolate space and acknowledged a relationship—different for each one—with the society in which she lived. As they came to know one other and to know more women poets' work, they felt increasingly free to experiment and to write poetry in all of the traditional "masculine"

genres. As is clear, women were writing all of the kinds of poetry that men were. By doing so, they were upholding the means and aesthetic standards of Augustan poetry, but, significantly, they were also undermining, through their practice of blatantly attacking, the prejudices against them as women and writers based on sex and gender.[55]

Egerton and Montagu could assume the voice of the Juvenalian satirist and turn its misogynist stances back on their contemporary, male practitioners. Fifty years later, poets took Augustanism and did the same, as Anna Laetitia Barbauld did in *On a Lady's Writing* (1773). This poem describes the perfectly disciplined woman and demonstrates how useful the polished poetry of the early century could be. Like a Palladian house, everything is balanced, and the use of caesura and carefully arranged alliteration emphasizes this compositional strategy.

> Her even lines her steady temper show;
> Neat as her dress, and polish'd as her brow;
> Strong as her judgment, easy as her air;
> Correct though free, and regular though fair:
> And the same graces o'er her pen preside
> That form her manners and her footsteps guide.[56]

The poem is simultaneously about handwriting, personal conduct, and poetic composition, and that makes it both subversively critical and almost as painful as Egerton's *The Liberty*. "Custom" has created this ideal, and Augustan "decorum" this poem. Hundreds of such moral poems existed, and some were painstakingly cross-stitched by the young women who were to internalize the lessons. Barbauld, of course, is composing long after the Augustan period and thereby emphasizing the superannuated standard. From the beginning of her career she addressed political and social issues bluntly and demonstrated the ability to make her criticisms acceptable. By 1798 the volume from which this poem came was "in the possession of every person who has any pretensions to taste, and every library in the kingdom."[57] The poem's deliberate ambiguity and impenetrable tone ruthlessly expose the cost of such discipline. A perfect example of a feminist palimpsest, the poem could be read literally by old-fashioned moralists, but women could see a text reiterating the message of the image of Egerton's "Commanding clock."

It became common for women to criticize women who enabled their own oppression and to call upon their sex to lead reform. As Egerton wrote in *The Liberty*, "the Devil Censure" would have no "Terror, if we did not fear." Sur-

rounded by formally ambitious poems and a culture that privileged that kind of writing, women used such forms to prove their discipline and intelligence. As Hacker said, the form itself often contributed to a compelling effect. Montagu's *Saturday. The Small-Pox. Flavia* should be read as a dramatization of the most tyrannical example of the "custom" enforced by the sex-gender system. The speaker of this poem has reaped every advantage of the beautiful, accomplished woman, and smallpox has taken them all away from her. This deliberately histrionic, over-the-top lament by a Belinda-like society belle, as we know, was both satire and an outpouring of personal fears and sadness. In 1747 Horace Walpole published it in *Six Town Eclogues With some other Poems*, and Robert Dodsley included it in the 1748 *Collection*. In 1750 Mary Jones published her subtle *After the Small Pox*. Like Montagu, she dared to engage with Pope and Swift; indeed, in a different way she invited comparison between some of her poems and theirs. *After the Small Pox* takes the trope of the sign of a commercial establishment that Swift had used in *Stella's Birthday, 1721* and offers self-assured consolation to Montagu and women like her. Using Swift's hexameter couplets, she writes,

> For what is Beauty but a Sign?
> A face hung out, thro' which is seen
> The nature of the good within.
> Thus the coquet her beau ensnares
> With study'd smiles, and forward airs:
> The graver prude hands out a frown
> To strike th' audacious gazer down;
> But she alone, whose temp'rate wit
> Each nicer medium can hit,
> Is still adorn'd with ev'ry grace,
> And wears a sample in her face.

Jones is saying that whatever a person is within will be written on the face. "Yet grieve not," she says, "For nature's pencil soon shall trace, / And once more finish off your face, / Which all your neighbours shall out-shine, / And of your Mind remain the Sign."[58] These calm lines address Montagu's hyperbole and promise that her mind will shine through and redraw an attractive face. Montagu's second line referred to a "wounded mind," and Jones repairs it.

Just as Jones invited people to compare her with Montagu and Swift in *After the Small Pox*, she invites comparison with Pope in *Epistle to Lady Bowyer*. He had made the formal verse *apologeia* a challenging and seductive form with *An Epistle*

to Arbuthnot, and although many women quoted or altered selected passages from it, she is one of the few to offer a full-scale adaptation. She uses the conventional questions and the interlocutor well. The poem begins with the poet speaking; rather than complaining of besieging hacks, she opens with a compliment to Pope, the unrivaled "tall oak" of contemporary poetry. "And yet you'd have me write!" is her transitional line addressed to Lady Bowyer, and her next lines are comic imaginings of her poetry used for such humble, ephemeral purposes as mending a candle. These lines contain numerous subtle allusions to the persona Pope has created, as she says she desires to live "unenvy'd": " 'Tis more than *Pope*, with all his wit can do. / 'Tis more than You, with wit and beauty join'd, / A pleasing form, and a discerning mind." These economical lines remind the reader of the envy that made Pope's life warfare on earth and deliver the compliments that establish the interlocutor as the satiric norm. At this point she takes off from Pope's poem in two ways. First, she writes her version of his themes on flattery, and second, she devotes her *apologeia* to a satire of the patronage system rather than a full-scale defense of satire. By doing so, she exposes the male patronage system as business in which "Journeymen of State" and "titled Poor" contract with lords who "seldom read" and are driven by "places, pensions, ribbons." They contrast markedly with Lady Bowyer, Lady Beauclerk, and Charlotte Clayton, the kind of "patrons" who subscribe to her work.

The last three verses of the poem boldly claim artistic comparison to Pope. "Is there a Lord. . . ," she begins the first of them, and the lines are as precise, polished, and rhythmical as parallel passages in Pope's moral essays. "Peace to the rest. I can be no man's slave," she echoes in the next and captures most of the assertions Pope makes about his satire in *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, including, "By Fortune humbled, yet not sunk so low / To shame a friend, or fear to meet a foe." The final verse rewrites his tribute to his parents and genders the portrait of the desirable life with lines such as this allusion to marriage: "No houshold lord, for better or for worse." She demonstrates the ability to write memorable, epigrammatic lines that Pope and Gray made a challenge to other poets. Her final line is, "An honest heart is worth its weight in *gold.*" Her gendered perspective criticizes aspects of the patronage system, including its exclusion of most women, ignored by Pope and others.

Mary Barber's *To a Lady, who commanded me to send her an Account in Verse, how I succeeded in my Subscription* is another compelling *apologeia.* Unrecognized as such perhaps because of its everyday language and its opening conversation among women that satirizes attitudes toward women writing, Barber answers many of

the form's questions and conventionally drops the names of her friends and of some of her own poems. For example, we learn that she wrote "To mend and to enlarge the Mind" and that Swift and Dorset encouraged her. The final verse takes the reader back to the interlocutor and develops the contrast between this satiric norm and those described in the poem: "You, Madam, who your Sex adorn, / Who Malice and Detraction scorn, / Who with superior Sense are bless'd. . . ."

Elizabeth Hands combines the theme of the writing woman's difficulties in obtaining access to publication with the condemnation of women who maintain the tyrannical force of custom in *A Poem, on the Supposition of an Advertisement appearing in a Morning Paper, of the Publication of a Volume of Poems, by a Servant Maid.* Another group of women with satiric names ridicule the poet from a superior position:

> A servant write verses! says Madam Du Bloom;
> Pray what is the subject? — a Mop, or a Broom?
> He, he, he, — says Miss Flounce; I suppose we shall see
> An Ode on a Dishclout. . . .[59]

The ladies at tea express many of the same opinions that Barber's ladies did — that they have no "taste" for poetry and that women's subjects were sure to be low. In form the poem is closer to the segment of Finch's Horatian *Ardelia's Answer to Ephelia* that begins with this exchange between gossipy women:

> More was she saying, when fresh object came,
> Now what's that thing, she crys, Ardelia, guesse?
> A woman sure. —
> Ay and a Poetesse,
> They say she writes, and 'tis a common jest.[60]

As Egerton had, Hands's women note that writing recipes and explaining how to make "cowslip wine, that would pass for Champaign" are considered more appropriate occupations for women. A few ladies, Miss Rhymer and Miss Pines, perhaps poets themselves, champion "genius" wherever it may appear. The ladies turn from the servant maid's book and tea to cards: "The ladies ambitious for each others crown, / Like courtiers contending for honours sat down." Suddenly the fact that the women are merely behaving like men is writ large, and their attitudes toward Hands, women's poetry, and the class system are shown to be the effects of the sex-gender system. Finch's poem also took a political turn in a

darting attack: "Why shou'd we from that pleasing art be ty'd, / Or like State Pris'ners, Pen and Ink deny'd?" (Reynolds, 45). Hinnant calls this poem her "most vigorous and successful feminist polemic" (Hinnant, 31). Comparing women to the most dangerous prisoners, the kind silenced in the Tower of London, brings to mind her many allusions to the dangers men see in women's writing and highlights the compelling intensity that reveals the woman holding the pen. Her women characters are also the product of the sex-gender system, in this case represented by such effects as Almeria's competitiveness toward all other women. As Stuart Hall observes, "In the bitter struggle for place and position which characterizes dependent societies, every notch on the scale mattered profoundly."[61] The women in all of these poems articulate their society's judgments of female conduct, whether it be managing servants, maintaining rank, or expressing approved opinions about reading. In this remarkable line of poems displaying the interplay of women's opinions, the poets go beyond the novelists, who are usually perceived as leading the feminist critique of society, to reveal the debilitating effects—for conformist and rebel—of the absorption of cultural mores even as they make themselves and their dedication to writing visible.

Jones, Barber, and Hands use their carefully disciplined poems as a form of life-writing. Hands, who often unexpectedly comments on employer-servant relationships within poems apparently about something else, has Miss Prudella, Mrs. Candour, and Lady Marr-joy discuss the behavior of servants and how to manage them. The former servant portrays the women as thinking of the servants without understanding or empathy. As objects or machines, the servants are to be controlled, employed "as long as 'twas light," and then sent to bed without a candle. Hands is a much underrated poet and thinker, as attested to by her multiple ways of satirizing the women and her ability to make the reader recognize how completely external and superficial their view is of servants, whether they write or not.

Women poets' writing about writing contributed to these ongoing public controversies about the nature and place of women, and the number of published poems grew at a crucial time in the history of women writers. Between 1730 and 1760 women writers encouraged one another and had encouraging friends, and they became accepted and appreciated in the larger society. This interval and these poems heartened women writing between 1760 and 1790, when, as many modern critics argue, the century became more conservative, and domains more gendered. Women continued to use classical and "Augustan" forms to demonstrate their mastery of poetic form and their control of emotion. These tech-

niques continued to enable life-writing and to control the representation of the writer. Sarah Dixon's beautiful Horatian epistle *To the Muse* (1740) and Mary Darwall's classical *Elegy on the Uses of Poetry* (1764) are but two examples. As Montagu had, Dixon wrenches the familiar into radical new uses. The opening of *To the Muse* begins with a Popeian echo, "Friend to my *Peace*," but it immediately takes on a nearly erotic energy as it describes the writing life:

> Friend to my *Peace*, thou Object of my Love,
> E're dawning Reason could the Choice approve,
> Through every change of Life and Fortune, *Thou*,
> My constant Solace, to this instant *Now*.

The unusual exploitation of the iambic beat in the last couplet hardly prepares the reader for what follows. The poet describes being persuaded to give up the Muse with predictable reasons and imagery, but suddenly the poem expands into a description of the poet's retreat from her vacuous day, a meeting with the Muse, and, with a recommitment to writing, each sense reawakens: "'Tis then the Soul her *Heaven* born Freedom finds, / Learns its own *Worth* . . ." and "I feel thy Influence, and sweet Peace come on; / Care flies before thee."[62] The poem is so unusual because it manages to avoid comparing love of the Muse to love of a friend or a lover or to the Platonic conception of love. As fervent as the language is, the poem ends with deep tranquillity. This love between the Muse and her is like no other and seals the rightness—the destiny—of writing. Darwall's *Elegy on the Uses of Poetry* depends equally upon classical structures, imagery, language, and tensions. Through conventional personifications, she touches almost every note in the midcentury reflection elegy on poetic subjectivity:

> At this still Hour oft thro' the high-arch'd Grove,
> Where dwells sage *Contemplation*, let me roam;
> Where Heav'n-born *Truth*, and keen-ey'd *Genius* rove,
> Where *Peace* resides in *Freedom's* Moss-roof'd Dome.

The poem ends with a pledge to practice the highest art and an address to the Reverend Randall Darwall, "Friend to *Virtue*, *Piety*, and *Truth*."[63] In her poem the strain between poetic and social expectations and her very personal statements about her aspirations and commitments is first obvious and then resolved. Darwall, like Dixon, found the poetic conventions enabling. In both poems, the women find what Louise Bogan has called "the direct courage to be themselves" and restore "genuine and frank feeling to a literary situation which had be-

come . . . artificial and dry."[64] Women like Mary Jones learned strategies that allowed them to acknowledge and covertly counter the increasing gendering pressures. In a number of her poems, for example, she contrasts levels of poetry as "solemn lyre" versus "simple warbler," Farinelli versus a cobbler, and the Muse versus spontaneous verse.[65] Sappho, who had written, "May I write words more naked than flesh, stronger than bone, more resilient than sinew, sensitive than nerve," was replaced in many women poets' work by Philomela, the nightingale. In their hands the nightingale became a powerful symbol of freedom and musicality and, of course, of the woman who cannot be silenced.[66]

The sheer variety of poems on permission to write demonstrates women's growing confidence. Many of them present the poet stepping forth independently. Elizabeth Singer Rowe's popular and much-reprinted *On the Death of Mr. Thomas Rowe* begins with a request to the Muses to assist her pensive strain but concludes that she does not need help. "'Tis but to speak the dictates of my heart," she counsels. Joanna Baillie's *Address to the Muses* is an insolent address to the Muses promising to continue writing "Though greater inspirations never fall to me." That this poem illustrates in imagery and versification the power poetry can have makes it especially delightfully defiant:

> Ye are the spirits who preside
> In earth and air and ocean wide;
> In hissing flood and crackling fire;
> In horror dread and tumult dire.

Demonstrating the playful, parodic proliferation that Judith Butler has identified as a strategy of resistance in *Gender Trouble*, these poets, like Mary Savage in her *Address to the Muse*, often have great fun with clichés.

The theme of Helen Maria Williams's fine *Address to Poetry* is how poetry's "melting music" can suit each mood, and the perspective is that of the poet. "Oh Poesy! Oh nymph most dear, / To whom I early gave my heart," she exclaims.[67] There is an unselfconsciousness about ambition and especially about intellectual aspiration in her *Address* that is unusual among poems on permission to write. Never forgetting that she is "addressing" Poetry, Williams writes, "For thine is all the wealth of mind, / Thine the unborrow'd gems of thought, / The flash of light, by souls refin'd, / From heav'n's empyreal fource [*sic*] exulting caught" (1:16). Arguing that poetry can be original ("unborrow'd gems of thought") and express every universal emotion, she gives Shakespeare the superior place:

O Nature's Poet! the untaught
The simple mind thy tale pursues,
And wonders by what art it views
The perfect image of each native thought.
(1:18)

One of the most remarkable achievements of this poem is its dignified, confident assertion of what poetry means to people in Williams's specific culture. Censorious, as so many of these poets are, of the ways her contemporaries spend their lives, she still writes,

Ev'n *here*, in scenes of pride and gain,
Where faint each genuine feeling glows;
Here, Nature asks, in want and pain,
The dear illusions verse bestows;
The poor, from hunger, and from cold,
Spare one small coin, the ballad's price;
Admire their poet's quaint device,
And marvel much at all his rhymes unfold.
(1:20)

That the rich, giddy consumers and the poor *need* poetry and seek it out is an arresting statement. The poem's gravitation is toward the sublime and even the gothic:

Wild Poesy, in haunts sublime,
Delights her lofty note to pour;
She loves the hanging rock to climb,
And hear the sweeping torrent roar:
The little scene of cultur'd grace
But faintly her expanded bosom warms;
She seeks the daring stroke, the aweful charms,
Which Nature's pencil throws on Nature's face.

Oh Nature! thou whose works divine
Such rapture in this breast inspire,
As makes me dream one spark is mine
Of Poesy's celestial fire.
(1:21)

Rather than treating her selection of great poets chronologically, Williams seems to be working with a hierarchy of modes and moods, but these common denominators are clear. She praises Milton for "energies of mine [*sic*]" and calls him "awful," arousing awe for his achievement *and* for the power of his narratives, awakening the religious sublime, in his readers. It is winter, with the "savage madness of the storm" that "spread those horrors that exalt my soul," in Thomson's poetry over which she lingers rather than the other seasons, and it is Eloisa, not Belinda, in Pope's poetry that appeals to her. As she invokes each major poet, Williams is also commenting on the poetic genres. She identifies Gray only by his lines, "Whom 'melancholy mark'd her own,' " and makes a flowing transition from his *Elegy in a Country Church-Yard* to *The Bard*, from his most famous elegy to his most ambitious political statement with its classical elegiac form.

Every woman poet seems to have written about the poetic kinds, their cultural and gender status, and especially in playful and parodic poems taken stands that can only be described as revisionary, resisting, and even subverting. Bringing such poems together, ordering and contextualizing them, and reconsidering the impact of gender pressures on poetry promises not only to give us a different, fuller landscape but also contributes to our understanding of women's history, of contemporary opinions about poetic kinds, and of genre itself, which a variety of theorists have demonstrated is one of the most powerful determining forces exerted on any writer. Finch's fraught relationship with gender and genre and her creative and often defiant poems about this relationship are the subject of sophisticated modern criticism, but few other poets and even fewer groups of women poets have been recognized, let alone analyzed. These poems are a little history in themselves. Like much of Finch's work, Judith Cowper Madan's much-praised and often reprinted *Progress of Poetry* is squarely within the Augustan tradition in terms of both form and content. Madan mentions a large number of poets, references their individual styles and verse peculiarities, and by echoing many of them shows a developing repertory of poetic techniques. She is especially skilled with alliteration, and her couplets' precise imagery contributes to the reinforcement of sense with sound.

On Cowley: Each sparkling line, where fire with fancy flows,
The rich profusion of his genius shows.
On Waller: Gentle, as flakes of feather'd snow descend.[68]

These characterizations are commonplaces, but Madan was a very young woman and displays here careful, intelligent reading and considerable poetic promise.

Compared with the range and imagination of Brereton's *The Dream*, an imita-

tion of Chaucer's *House of Fame*, Madan's more modest ambitions and the "exercise" quality of her poem stand out. Brereton rides a huge eagle and survives political as well as poetic figures; a major theme is fame and its legitimate and illegitimate bases. Instead of Madan's orderly list of poets, Brereton moves from the usual line of Homer through Pindar to a scene reminiscent of Pope's *Dunciad* in which crowds of pretenders vie with true geniuses in a chaotic world of crass, trivial values. Yet Brereton published a poem in the *White-Hall Evening Post* praising Madan's poem. "Hail, O tenth Muse!" she begins, and she praises her for the qualities Madan had exalted:

> Soft-flowing, copious, active, strong and bright,
> Artful displays a laurel'd sacred Train,
> In so sublime, so heav'nly sweet a Strain.[69]

As Brereton's *Dream* shows, poets became increasingly creative with circuit-of-Apollo and progress-of-poetry poems. Mary Leapor's very imaginative *Proclamation of Apollo* features a fight among poets that ends in feasting. Critics such as Hugh Jenkins have documented Finch's resistance to Pope's arguments about women poets. That Pope (perhaps acting within a genre convention and a social situation) granted her poetic achievement is more than overbalanced by his insistence that Finch is championing a female canon of "Sapho's we admire no more." Her own witty reminder to him of Orpheus's fate at the hands of women is, again, overbalanced by her lifelong consciousness of her sex and her admonitions in her poetry to remain cautious and retired in this changed time.[70] While it might be pleasant to imagine the poet who insults women torn to pieces, with his head floating down the river, that the head is still singing cannot be forgotten. After its pages of searching commentary on fame, Brereton's poem concludes,

> Intent I stood to hear, and see,
> When one, methought, thus whisper'd me—
> "How didst Thou to yon Place ascend?
> Thou wilt not, sure! to Fame pretend?"[71]

The first word of Madan's poem is "Unequal," and in recent criticism, rather than being historicized, her poem has been interpreted as evidence of Madan's stifling identification with male poets, an identification that contributed to her "silencing."[72] Valerie Rumbold seems to believe that Madan had nothing to say beyond her early work: "By her midtwenties Cowper had worked her way through a variety of essentially parasitic apprentice pieces, for nearly all her longer poems respond in some fairly simple way to a text or texts."[73]

This unsympathetic characterization does not admit the possibility that doing so might have been a useful apprenticeship for a very young poet. Rumbold believes that Madan fails to display "any explicit acknowledgment that verse is a discipline to be studied."[74] This poem and others like it, such as Jane Brereton's comparing Terence and Horace,[75] however, are guides to women's taste and evidence of their careful reading of a range of earlier poets, both canonical and noncanonical, and their understanding of other poets' values and accomplishments. To some extent, Pope's early poetry shows him putting himself to school to earlier poets' work, both classical and English, as almost all serious poets do. Madan's poem shows that she is beginning to test her poetic wings. ". . . Poetry's exalted charms I sing; / How, free as air, her strains spontaneous move," she writes and hopes that she will discover the genius that bestows force like Pope's and Addison's. Her final image is one of glittering stars: "Pleas'd, we behold, from heaven's unbounded height, / A thousand orbs pour forth promiscuous light: / While all around, the spangled lustre flows."[76] Rather than eclipse and inequality, she is imagining a host of shining poets with herself among them, a scene more beautiful than the sky dominated by Pope alone. These lines are improved in the 1783 revision and suggest that she sees the possibility of taking her place in this sky more strongly:

> Amaz'd we view, from the etherial height,
> A thousand orbs pour forth their sacred light;
> Blended their lustre seems, while all around
> Successive sparkles gild the milky bound;
> The dazzled eye, in countless beauty lost,
> Vainly essays to mark which shines the most.[77]

These poets' cultivation of classical and Augustan forms seems to anticipate Cowper's saying, "There is a pleasure in poetic pains / Which only poets know" *(The Task)*. Surveying women's Horatian odes, epistles, and satires alone provides ample evidence of their dedication to the craft, their willingness to set high standards for themselves, and their achievements. Content and form are beautifully reconciled in a poem like Elizabeth Carter's *Ode to Wisdom*. Here are typical lines from this poem on Pallas Athene:

> When Fortune drops her gay parade
> When Pleasure's transient roses fade,
> And wither in the tomb,
> Unchanged is thy immortal prize;

Thy ever-verdant laurels rise
In undecaying bloom.
(Lonsdale, 170)

In poems on conventional subjects metrical daring is easy to find, as it is in the anapestic tetrameter of Finch's *On Lady Carteret* and in the catalectic trochaic tetrameter of her *Enquiry after Peace*. All of these poets adapted forms in impressively original and successful ways, as Montagu did the Ovidian epistle and eclogue. The body of these published poems demonstrating their authors' willingness to go beyond adaptation to true invention and to extend the subjects and uses of poetry for themselves as individuals and as citizens created a new space for women who would be poets.

Elizabeth Singer Rowe

Different as Elizabeth Singer Rowe and Montagu are, they came to be linked in later women's consciousnesses as dual examples of the serious, successful writing life. For instance, Janet Little's *On Reading Lady Mary Montague and Mrs. Rowe's Letters* (1792) praises them both as poets. Of Montagu, she writes,

As Venus by night, so Montague bright
Long in the gay circle did shine:
She tun'd well the lyre, mankind did admire;
They praised, and they called her divine.

Little calls Rowe a model of virtue *and* wit and begins her tribute, "O excellent Rowe, much Britain does owe / To what you've ingen'ously penn'd."[78] Just as the best women poets praised Rowe, so they did Montagu, as Elizabeth Tollet and Anna Seward did. Women wrote in the forms they used, often assuming that the earlier women's influence would be recognized.

Montagu and Rowe were the most anthologized women poets of the century. They enjoyed the same verse forms, and even Rowe's serious poems about mortality can be related to Montagu's. In 1730, for instance, Montagu wrote *An Answer to a Lady Advising me to Retirement*, whose content recalls many of Rowe's poems but employs quite different sounds and tones:

You little know the Heart that you advise,
I view this various Scene with equal Eyes,
In crouded Court I find my selfe alone,
And pay my Worship to a nobler Throne.

Long since the value of this World I know,
Pity the Madness, and despise the Show,
Well as I can, my tedious part I bear
And wait Dismission without painfull Fear.

Seldom I mark Mankind's detested ways
Not hearing Censure, nor Affecting Praise,
And unconcern'd my Future Fate I trust;
To that sole Being, Mercifull and Just.

(H&G, 258–59)

This poem shows the sure touch of experienced handling of lifelong opinions with a new sense of mortality, and quatrains are one of Rowe's favorite forms.

Both Rowe and Montagu followed the usual pattern of "publication" in their time; that is, they circulated their manuscripts fairly widely, published at intervals, and left legacies that inarguably testify to their desire for a wider audience. Collections of their poetry and anthologized poems by both were readily available well into the next century. In fact, of Finch's generation, it was Rowe who cast the longest shadow; yet her poetry is nearly inaccessible today, and there will probably never be an authoritative edition. The publishing history of her poems eloquently counsels that the best-known poets' work may present even more problems for today's scholars and critics than that of those rarely reprinted. Only 198 libraries in the United States own Madeleine Marshall's *The Poetry of Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674–1737)*, published by Edwin Mellen, of Lewiston, Ontario, in 1987, which does not include all of Rowe's poetry. Moreover, Marshall worked with a flawed inheritance. The eccentric bookseller John Dunton almost undoubtedly tinkered with Rowe's poems; Marlene Hansen goes so far as to speculate that he "edited Philomela's poems the better to suit his own somewhat sensational commercial purposes."[79] Curll's 1736 *Philomela: or, Poems by Mrs. Elizabeth Singer (now Rowe)* was unauthorized, and he admits that he made "a little *Reformation* in the *Numbers* of some of them" and omitted the political poems written in "the *Heat of Youth*."[80] Shortly after her death, Theophilus Rowe and Henry Grove published, "in obedience to her commands," the poems and other writings Rowe had ordered sent to Grove. Grove, her father-in-law's cousin, and Rowe, her brother-in-law, expressed their willingness to edit her verse, and they chose to omit the poems in *Poems on Several Occasions*, calling them "juvenile follies" that "she thought only worthy of perpetual oblivion."[81] Although Rowe prepared the papers and chose Grove, Rowe, and Isaac Watts to

publish her writings posthumously, remarks in the prefixed "Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe" suggest that Rowe had not been deeply concerned with the order or with revision; she is, for instance, described as feeling "the pains of correcting . . . some kind of drudgery."[82] Rowe, Grove, and Watts express discomfort with some of her "too rapturous" expressions. Collation of poems in Grove and Rowe's *Miscellaneous Works in Prose and Verse of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe* with earlier printed versions shows that most changes are typographical and might be considered to modernize the poems a bit with changes in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.[83] These and some other differences may reflect Rowe's revisions as she got her papers in order at the end of her life, as when in *A Pastoral. Occasioned by the Reading of "Windsor Forest"* "Till o'er the Eastern Hills the Moon came on" in the 1736 Curll edition becomes "the morn came on" in the 1739. Occasionally, however, words are changed that seem to temper the emotion and reinforce the chaste Rowe; for example, "my tender Heart" in line 94 of *To the Memory of Thomas Rowe* becomes "my constant Heart." Both the original and the "enlarged" edition of *The History of Joseph* were printed in the last year of Rowe's life, notably by T. Worrall, the publisher of *Friendship in Death* (1728); thus, *Joseph* may be the only major poem published under her supervision. Her poetry was reprinted regularly until 1855,[84] but her long-lasting appeal is now unknown.

In the eighteenth century, Rowe's poetry fascinated women, and her life was an intriguing, even seductive model. Her poetry appeared in such prestigious and accessible places as *A Collection of Divine Hymns and Poems* (1709), Bernard Lintot's *Poems on Several Occasions: by His Grace the Duke of Buckingham . . . and other eminent hands* (1717), and Colman-Thornton's *Poems by Eminent Ladies* (1755). Her *Devout Exercises for the Heart in Meditation and Soliloquy*, edited by Isaac Watts, first published in 1738, remained so popular that it was reissued every year between 1790 and 1796, and new editions appeared regularly until 1855 in both Great Britain and America.[85] Even Curll's *Philomela* had two London editions (1736, 1738) and one Dublin edition (1738). Before her marriage, both John Dunton and Matthew Prior were her friends and suitors.[86] She married the pious historian Thomas Rowe, however, and after his death in 1715 she lived a somewhat retired and modestly philanthropic life.

Today Rowe is better known for her piety than for her poetry, a fact that seriously misleads literary historians. In her century she was known to be a serious, lifelong poet, and like Finch's, her poetry was appreciated by women for its beauty and imagery. Even before she died, she was known as the Heavenly Singer.[87] An unbroken stream of tributes to Rowe in the eighteenth century

illustrate what she represented to women. Finch compliments her in *The Miser and the Poet* (Reynolds, 192). Mary Masters's *Written in a blank Leaf of Mrs. Row's Works* is typical in its recognition of the subjects of her poetry and its forceful poetics: "Raptur'd I read these soft inspiring Lines, / Where *Rowe's* fair Mind in sacred Lustre shines; / *Love*, *Friendship*, *Virtue*, with full force appear."[88] In *On the Death of Mrs. Rowe* Elizabeth Carter wrote that Rowe represented poetry's highest purposes and praised her for "seraphic fire" and "sublime passions." Above all, she finds Rowe a poet:

> Bold as when raptur'd Seraphs strike the Lyre,
> Chaste as the Vestal's consecrated Fire;
> Soft as the balmy Airs, that gently play,
> In the calm Sun-set of a vernal Day;
> Sublime as Virtue; elegant as Wit;
> As Fancy various; and as Beauty sweet.[89]

Written years after Rowe's death, Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Verses on Mrs. Rowe* pays tribute to her harmony of sound and image and her poetic "fire" and asks that Rowe be her muse. She praises her in the terms previously reserved for Philips:

> Such were the notes our chaster SAPPHO sung,
> And every muse dropt honey on her tongue.
> Best shade! how pure a breath of praise was thine,
> Whose spotless life was faultless as thy line.
>
> (M&K, 79)

As she had been to poets before her, Rowe to Barbauld is exemplary as poet, intellect, and virtuous, happy human being: "Smooth like her verse her passions learn'd to move, / And her whole soul was harmony and love" (80). Early women poets' admiration for Rowe's poetry is not based on conservative values. What knowledge we have of her is almost exclusively of a few frequently anthologized poems. Those endlessly mourning her husband are popular choices.[90] Among the typical lines are, "For thee all thoughts of pleasure I forego, / For thee my tears shall never cease to flow," from *On the Death of Mr. Thomas Rowe*, and "While my *Alexis* withers in the tomb, / Untimely cropt," from *On the anniversary return of the day on which Mr. Rowe died* (both in Rowe, *Misc. Works*, 1:115). There is even a propensity to choose hymns with this tone. Hymn V is often anthologized; it begins, "In vain the dusky night retires" and includes the verse, "In vain! unless

my Saviour's face / These gloomy clouds controul, / And dissipate the sullen shades / That press my drooping soul" (Rowe, *Misc. Works*, 1:35, 36).

In her own century, the Miltonic *To Mrs. Arabella Marrow, in the Country* and *Despair*, the first echoing *L'Allegro* and the second *Il Penseroso*, were often anthologized.[91] Even very different hymns were selected for reprinting in her own time, as the popular Hymn I illustrates:

I.
The glorious armies of the sky
To thee, O mighty King!
Triumphant anthems consecrate,
And hallelujahs sing.
II.
But still their most exalted flights
Fall vastly short of thee;
How distant then must human praise
From thy perfections be!
III.
Yet how, my God, shall I refrain,
When to my ravish'd sense
Each creature in its various ways
Displays thy excellence?
IV.
The active lights that shine above,
In their eternal dance,
Reveal their skilful maker's praise
With silent elegance.
V.
The blushes of the morn confess
That thou are much more fair:
When in the east its beams revive
To gild the fields of air;
VI.
The fragrant, the refreshing breath
Of ev'ry flow'ry bloom,
In balmy whispers owns from thee
Their pleasing odours come.

VII.

The singing birds, the warbling winds,
And waters murm'ring fall,
To praise the first almighty cause
With diff'rent voices call.

VIII.

Thy num'rous works exalt thee thus,
And shall I silent be?
No, rather let me cease to breathe,
Than cease from praising thee.[92]

The movement from "glorious armies" praising God to herself and the graceful verses describing the sights, smells, and sounds that "ravish" her senses are typical of her carefully structured, accessible, musical poetry.

Rowe was the first woman to begin her career by submitting her work to periodicals, a route that many later women took. After she published her first poems, one full number of the *Athenian Mercury* and substantial sections of others were devoted to her work—an unusual tribute.[93] She signed herself "Philomela" and "the Pindarick Lady," and in these poems and the ones added in *Poems on Several Occasions*, *Written by Philomela* (1696) she created a wide range of dramatic, distinctive poetic voices and roles that would empower her poetry throughout her life. She wrote love, friendship, political, and social-comment poems, and this volume shows that she was already deeply engaged in writing religious poetry, encouraged perhaps by members of the Nonconformist circle who led the *Athenian Mercury.* She too was concerned with national events, and her *Upon King William's passing the Boyn* is a notable expression of Nonconformist loyalty to William. She experimented energetically in a variety of forms. Among the *Athenian Mercury* poems are a tribute to Sir Thomas Travel, two Canticles, her paraphrase of John 21:17, *Occasioned by the Report of the Queen's Death*, and *To One that Persuades Me to Leave the Muses. To One that Persuades Me* and other poems portray her as playful, self-deprecating, and yet a serious poet through and through. In this poem, her contribution to the Horatian *apologeia* poems, she anticipates Pope's *Epistle to Arbuthnot* by dramatizing herself and her addiction to writing in an idiomatic, funny poem:

Forgo the *charming Muses!* No, in spight
Of your ill-natur'd Prophecy I'll write,
And for the future *paint* my thoughts at large,

I waste no paper at the *Hunderds* charge:
I rob no *Neighboring Geese* of Quills, nor slink
For a collection to the Church for ink:
Besides my *Muse* is the most gentle thing
That ever yet made an attempt to *sing:*
I call no Lady *Punk*, nor Gallants *Fops*,
Nor set the *married world an edge for Ropes;*
Yet I'm so scurvily inclin'd to Rhiming,
That undesign'd my thought *burst out a chiming;*
My *active Genius* will by no means sleep,
And let it then its proper channel keep.[94]

Hers, she says, is a gentle Muse. She writes happily that she has everything needed to "indulge my Muse," including a beautiful setting, and in a confident ending she pledges herself to writing love poetry. This poem, *Love and Friendship*, *To Celinda*, *To Sir Charles Sedley*, and numerous other poems attest to the range of her secular poetry.

John Dunton, the editor of the 1696 *Poems on Several Occasions, Written by Philomela*, chose *Platonick Love* to open the volume, and this early poem plays with poetic conceptions about various kinds of love. In the first verse Rowe has a standard image of Renaissance Platonic love: "So Angels Love . . . / . . . / . . . all free and unconfin'd, / [In] that bright flame I bear thy brighter mind."[95] In the final verse she portrays divine love as the "lovely fountain" of all kinds of love. This collection of her poems includes fables, pastorals, elegies, religious and political poems, and seven love lyrics. The pastorals include a lament for unrequited love *(A Pastoral [Daphne and Philomela])* and two pastoral elegies, including one for Queen Mary and an imaginative one with a dying speech preceding the lament. Several poems are tributes to poets such as Sir Charles Sedley, and *A Pindarick, to the Athenian Society* praises Dryden, "A name I ne're could yet rehearse, / But straight my thoughts *were all transformed to verse*" (*Poems* 2:15). In this poem she praises the Athenian Society for not fearing "to *lash* the darling vices of the times" and asserts that the purposes of poetry are moral and social. The poems in this volume include tercets, Horatian epistles, heroic quatrains, Pindaric odes, hexameter quatrains, and a number of experimental forms. Some of the mostly youthful poems are metrically rough, but her wide acquaintance with poetry and her ambition and dedication are evident.

Rowe gave some of the most popular secular verse forms, including the heroic

epistle and poems derived from the *Heroides*, innovative turns. *Letters on Various Occasions* (1729) includes an imaginative exchange of letters between the condemned Lady Jane Gray [*sic*], the king's cousin, and Lord Guilford Dudley. Forced into marriage by their fathers in an attempt to keep Elizabeth and Mary from inheriting the throne upon Edward VI's death, Lady Jane was proclaimed queen by the Privy Council according to Edward's will. By 19 July 1553, however, the throne belonged to Mary, and Lady Jane and her husband were executed on 12 February 1554. *Lord Guilford Dudley to Lady Jane Gray* is in the voice of the husband, who admires her beauty and grace, loves her, and asks, "Why was thy Birth deriv'd from antient Kings?" The last stanza echoes John Donne: "O Death! where is thy boasted Conquest now?" Lady Jane left letters to her father and a sister, but Rowe's poems are entirely her own. The narrative situation is based on both history and the many embroidered accounts of Lady Jane's life in prose and drama, but Lady Jane herself is modeled on John Foxe's portrayal of her in *Acts and Monuments*. Rowe turns the heroic epistle into a celebration of the resignation to death that Lady Jane displayed. The fact that she was Protestant and a brave martyr are strongly asserted. Rowe's parents had met when her mother visited the Nonconformist prisoners, and after another prosecution her father gave up his Presbyterian ministry, moved to Frome, and became a clothier. Glimpses of Rowe's background and resulting sense of injustice emerge in many of her poems, as they do in these lines:

> Be *Rome!* be Hell! in their revengeful Pride,
> Their Flames, their Racks, and tort'ring Arts defy'd:
> A thousand glorious Witnesses have stood
> For this great Cause, and seal'd it with their Blood.[96]

An Epistle from Alexias, a noble Roman, to his wife, whom he left on his wedding-day, with a design to visit the Eastern churches casts the desire for heaven in Alexias's story of the vision that led him to become a hermit certain of heaven and, incidentally, of reunion in heaven with his bride. Rowe anticipates her *Letters from the Dead to the Living*[97] with *To Cleone*, which begins, "From the bright realms, and happy fields above, / . . . / All health to thee from those gay climes I send" (*Misc. Works*, 1:72).

Grove and Rowe chose *The Vision* as the first poem in volume 1 of *Miscellaneous Works*, and their doing so might be seen as contributing to the construction of a much narrower artist and human being than Rowe actually was.[98] It seems to imply that she gave up themes other than religious ones, which she did not. A more accurate way to interpret the poem is that it introduces one of the most engaged and creative religious poets in English literary history:

'Twas in the close recesses of a shade,
A shade for sacred contemplation made;
No beauteous branch, no plant, or fragrant flow'r,
But flourish'd near the fair, delicious bow'r;
With charming state its lofty arches rise
Adorn'd with blossoms, as with stars the skies;
All pure and fragrant was the air I drew,
Which winds thro' myrtle groves and orange blew;
Clear waves along with pleasing murmur rush,
And down the artful falls in noble cat'racts gush.

'Twas here, within this happy place retir'd,
Harmonious pleasures all my soul inspir'd;
I take my lyre, and try each tuneful string,
Now war, now love, and beauty's force would sing:
To heav'nly subjects now, in serious lays,
I strive my faint, unskilful voice to raise:
But as I unresolv'd and doubtful lay,
My cares in easy slumbers glide away;
Nor with such grateful sleep, such soothing rest,
And dreams like this I e'er before was bless'd;
No wild, uncouth chimera's intervene,
To break the perfect intellectual scene.

The place was all with heav'nly light o'er-flown,
And glorious with immortal splendor shone;
When! lo a bright ethereal youth drew near,
Ineffable his motions and his air.
A soft, beneficent, expressless grace,
With life's most florid bloom adorn'd his Face;
Wreaths of immortal palm his temples bind,
His azure robes hung free, and waving to the wind.
Angelic his address, his tuneful voice
Inspir'd a thousand elevating joys:
When thus the wond'rous youth his silence broke,
And with an accent all celestial spoke.

To heav'n, nor longer pause, devote thy songs,
To heav'n the muse's sacred art belongs;

> Let his unbounded glory be thy theme,
> Who fills th' eternal regions with his fame;
> And when death's fatal sleep shall close thine eyes,
> In triumph we'll attend thee to the skies;
> We'll crown thee there with everlasting bays,
> And teach thee all our celebrated lays.
> This spoke, the shining vision upward flies,
> And darts as lightning thro' the cleaving skies.
>
> (*Misc. Works*, 1:1–3)

The poem begins with a leisurely retreat into a peaceful bower, the kind of setting so beautifully created by Anne Finch. With phrases such as "sacred contemplation" and "lofty arches," the verse anticipates the conclusion, with its harmony among setting, poetry, and heaven. The poem becomes an imaginative variant on the self-portraits of women poets. In the next verse, the inspired poet takes the traditional lyre and then names the subjects of her earlier poems. Unsatisfied—"faint, unskilful voice," "unresolv'd and doubtful"—the poet falls asleep. The relaxed, conventional verses give way to the second set of verses, the appearance of the vision and his address to her. "To heav'n, nor longer pause, devote thy songs," the vision says, and his speech gives her the great subject of her verse but also brings her into the highest rank of poets. She will be crowned with "everlasting bays," and the angels will, in turn, teach her their "lays."

This poem is an unusual example of the poems that describe the poetic kinds and identify the ones most congenial to the author, as Finch's *The Critic and the Writer of Fables* does. Without hesitation or apology, Rowe identifies herself as a poet and describes the embrace of her vocation. The poem's subtle move to placing the poet among the angels rather than among the poets on Parnassus or in Elysium, as the circuit-of-Apollo poems do, is the kind of little-noticed, confident self-assertion that Rowe often manages.

Most poetry is, among genres, a unique combination of the individual and the social, the public and the private. This is woman's space, and 1690-1725 was one of the major periods in which the always permeable and wavering borders were being most actively tested and explored. Rowe was part of this project, and her special contribution was to expand the uses and kinds of religious poetry. Indeed, some of the most adventurous poetry in content and style written by women is religious, and this often-ignored literary kind is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Hymns, Narratives, and Innovations in Religious Poetry

> With Bible great upon her Table layd
> Yet with her pen & Inke expresses made
> — JANE CAVENDISH

Jane Cavendish's lines describe a woman writing, not reading. Moreover, she is writing "expresses," urgent or urgently felt forms of writing,[1] and so, in some way, the Bible has fired her composition. Of all of the eighteenth-century poets, male or female, Elizabeth Singer Rowe left the best and most diverse body of religious poetry, and Jane Cavendish's image brings Rowe to mind. As a religious poet she created new forms, experimented fruitfully with existing ones, and was an important part of major transformations in the uses of religious verse. As with *The Vision*, Rowe gradually learned to use existing kinds of poetry for personal, social, and religious purposes. New genres are created when old ones do not meet the needs of writers and their culture, and Rowe is a fascinating example of this phenomenon. In her "devout soliloquies" and especially in her long narrative poem, *The History of Joseph*, she broke new ground. Her work is a touchstone for organizing this chapter's discussion of some types of religious poetry.

Religious poetry is a huge subject, and it was in the eighteenth century that it began to be what Blanford Parker calls a "compartment of literature."[2] Rich and varied traditions funneled into it, and the century was filled with religious tension and change that gave the poetry immediacy and unusual significance. Yet a chasm

exists between the way twentieth-century critics treated it and the way they dealt with the religious Renaissance poetry of John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, the Sidneys, and Thomas Traherne. Part of its fall from "literature" may be its association with women poets. Almost as often as critics and historians note the large amount of religious poetry that women wrote, it is judged inferior. Germaine Greer summarizes a common idea, "Religion remained the principal subject-matter of women's verse, the principal justification for women's writing and the best guarantee of a poetess's success for two hundred years," and she calls hymn writing "a version of dittying."[3] Men wrote an enormous amount of religious poetry as well, and with a very few exceptions theirs too has been neglected or treated with sweeping generalizations. Only Christopher Smart and William Cowper have enjoyed serious, mainstream analysis, and Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley a special kind of attention—compartmentalized. Only a few critics have dissented, as Bonamy Dobrée did when he praised Watts for "his variety, his metrical experiment, and his imagery" and his "fusion of image with thought and emotion" and compared him favorably over several pages to some of his contemporaries. As David Morris has said, "John and Charles Wesley . . . are not generally considered poets, perhaps for the same reason that hymns are not considered poems. This prejudice impoverishes our understanding of eighteenth-century poetry."[4] Margaret Doody agrees: "The religious experience of the Augustans has never been fully or perfectly treated. I suspect that it is not peripheral but central to Augustan literature."[5] We should not "suspect," we should recognize. Contemplating that eighteenth-century religious poetry was written between that of John Milton and William Blake might lead us to believe that we should take it more seriously and admit that it is a major type of eighteenth-century poetry.

The forms that poets loved and wrote well, such as the pastoral and the ode, are found in abundance in religious poetry. Admittedly, it is sometimes hard to draw a firm line between religious and secular poetry. John Sitter and others emphasize how strongly poets felt ethical responsibilities and how often poems that begin humorously come to contemplate eternity, as Swift's *To Mr. Congreve* and Cowper's *Task* do. "Sweet is the harp of prophesy," Cowper writes in his celebration of the invention of the sofa:

> Too sweet
> Not to be wrong'd by a mere mortal touch;
> Nor can the wonders it records be sung
> To meaner music, and not suffer loss.

. . . . . .
That not t'attempt it, arduous as he deems
The labor, were a task more arduous still.[6]

Ann Messenger points out another complication: "Christian beliefs underlie so many poems that are not specifically sacred."[7] Many poets of the century would probably agree with Elizabeth Carter that the "noblest purposes" of poetry were

To raise the thoughts, and moralize the mind,
The chaste delights of virtue to inspire,
And warm the bosom with seraphic fire,
Sublime the passions, lend devotion wings,
And celebrate the FIRST GREAT CAUSE of things.[8]

Given the seriousness with which eighteenth-century people took Christianity, Carter's poem would prepare us to find religious elements in an overwhelming number of the century's poetry. In order to limit the scope of this chapter, I will deal only with poems that are specifically and overwhelmingly sacred in content.

Religious poetry occupied an important place in the careers of male and female poets. Seventeenth-century women had published books of devotional poetry, and critics are beginning to recognize their importance in constructing the modern woman writer.[9] Ann Finch is representative of slightly later women poets. Among her earliest publications were six religious poems in *Miscellanea Sacra* (1696),[10] and she composed religious poetry throughout her life. Her religion as much as her marriage and the political exigencies of her time formed her thought, and this could be said of almost everyone in the century. For other poets, as it did for Finch, their religious poetry depended upon the forms and technical skills of their other poetry,[11] and they knew English poetry of the past and present well. For instance, Finch's strengths in the poetry of statement and of imaginative narratives of well-rendered situations served her especially well, and many of the forms in which she wrote religious poetry encouraged musicality and genuine emotional force, which increasingly marked her secular poetry.

Rowe is unusual in the proportion of her work that is religious, but the amount of good religious poetry written by the best women poets is even more unacknowledged than hers. Major studies of hymns ignore them; indeed, there is a single, negative mention of Rowe in Donald Davie's *The Eighteenth-Century Hymn in England* and none in major books by J. R. Watson, David Morris, and Lionel Adey. All of the early-eighteenth-century women poets, however, wrote excellent hymns, and hymns by Barbauld, Williams, and others continue to be

sung. We can read their poetic and sectarian roots in their hymns, as well as find distinguishing, original conceptions. Chudleigh's poem *The Elevation* begins with an imaginative twist:

> O how ambitious is my Soul,
> How high she now aspires!
> There's nothing can on Earth controul,
> Or limit her Desires.
>
> (Ezell, 78)

Ambition, usually considered a sin and certainly not an appropriate feminine desire, becomes a longing for heaven. The frustrations of gender limits so prominently displayed in Egerton's *Emulation* and *The Liberty* are overcome in hymn after hymn by women. They repeatedly speak of breaking bonds, soaring free, and experiencing unrestrained thought and expression.[12]

This chapter begins with an introduction to paraphrase, the most common kind of verse inspired by reading the scriptures. It then takes up the hymn, for in this century congregational singing and the songs written for it revolutionized church services and worship. Women contributed actively, and the hymns of Mary Masters, Susannah Harrison, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Amelia Opie, and Helen Maria Williams, among others, survive in today's Protestant hymnals. Finally, Rowe provides an entrée into investigation of two revisionary kinds of religious poetry, the narrative tale based on incidents in the Bible, already a popular form, and "devout soliloquies," a genre she invented.

The Voice of Paraphrase

The most frequently written religious poems were paraphrases of passages from the Bible,[13] and they were written in every poetic form and meter. There were biblical passages on which most poets tried their skill, just as they were testing themselves with odes on Fancy and satires on fashionable London pastimes. Rowe's work personifies the importance of this major kind of eighteenth-century poetry. From the beginning of her career, there was great variety in Rowe's religious poetry, both in content and in tone, and she wrote creatively in all of its major forms. In her 1696 *Poems on Several Occasions* there are fine paraphrases and dramatic meditations on several psalms and on John 3:16 and Revelations 1:13–18. *The Expostulation* looks forward to her poems about death and the new forms she would invent. This fretful address to God seems awkward in tone, and its form, the Horatian ode, is far from actualized, but later, as her 1739

Miscellaneous Works shows, she would write well-crafted poems on this theme in a variety of forms. She was obviously an avid reader of religious poetry, as an imitation of Crashaw, a poem to Isaac Watts, and *To Mr. Prior. On his Solomon* show. She selected unusual biblical subjects to versify and wrote *The translation of Elijah*, a paraphrase of Revelation 16, and *The Conflagration. An Ode* (a quite cheerful poem on the end of the world: "While burning bolts and hail-stones rake the ground. / Resistless whirlwinds bluster here and there").

The paraphrases in the 1696 collection of Rowe's poems are highly experimental apprentice pieces. They include six poems derived from miscellaneous verses from the Bible and ten canticles, poems based on the Song of Songs. *A Pindarick Poem on Habbakuk* is a typological poem ending, "So now, great God, wrapt in avenging *Thunder*, / Meet thine and William's Foes, and tread them *groveling* under." One of a group of poems she wrote praising King William, this poem takes its inspiration from the third chapter of Habakkuk, which celebrates God's deliverance of his people from the oppression of the Chaldeans. Verse 3 begins, "God came from Teman," and her poem begins "When God from *Teman* came" (Marshall, 136–38). Her paraphrase of John 21:17 attempts heroic couplets, and that of Revelations 1:13–18 is in quatrains. She simplifies the language of the King James Version and makes the images more human and familiar.[14] For example, in the paraphrase of Revelations she rewrites the fifteenth verse of the Bible, "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace," as "His Feet were strong and dreadful" (Marshall, 132).

Her canticles, two of which were published among her earliest poems in the *Athenian Mercury*[15] and five of which appeared in the 1696 Dunton collection, are equally varied and experimental. She may have been acquainted with some of the earlier books of devotional poetry by women, possibly even *Eliza's Babes*, in which the anonymous author paraphrased the Song of Songs into "female love songs" to Christ.[16] Rowe's earliest, *Paraphrase on Canticle 5,6, etc.*, is in somewhat awkward heroic couplets, and the one on 7.11 in simple quatrains rhyming *abcb*. As these poems make clear, paraphrasing offers a number of educational advantages to the poet. Close work with diction, meter, rhyme, and structure are required, and especially where something both well known and "sacred" is concerned, the poet can take few liberties. Scripture provided an alternative figurative language rich in different tones, metaphors, and symbols from those of the now-conventional Augustan secular poetry, and poets like Rowe drew freely upon both, mingling and juxtaposing as the content of their poems dictated. The best of these early poems are the ones closest to the Old Testament language and imagery, like the *Pindarick Poem on Habbakuk*, and the least mellifluous in Augustan heroic couplets.

Although some paraphrases of the canticles were by then routinely included in licensed books of metrical psalms and in George Wither's *Psalmes of David translated into lyrick-verse*, Rowe's decision to paraphrase them was daring, perhaps even in harmony with the claim poets and women fiction writers of her generation made to be experts on love. As the commentator of *The Interpreter's Bible* writes, "The theme of the book is love: pure, sensuous, youthful, passionate love; love that is 'hungry as the sea.' "[17] Her most important early achievement may be the voice she creates for many of her canticles, that of the spouse in the Song of Songs, "a female voice that spoke with intense passion for all humanity," as Madeleine Marshall describes it,[18] but the passion is really for Christ and union with her God. In *Paraphrase on Canticle 5,6, etc.*, she writes,

> Oh! How his *Pointed Language*, like a Dart,
> Sticks to the *softest Fibres* of my Heart,
> . . . . . .
> And whilst I the inchanting sound admire,
> *My melting Vitals in a Trance expire.*[19]

The first verse of the paraphrase of chapter 3 of the Song of Solomon is very close to the biblical original but is followed by two original verses, one spoken by the bridegroom and one by the bride. With a very few exceptions the religious verse of the century is lamented for being without the "intensity" and "fierce pressure" of sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century religious poetry. However, this paraphrase replicates the intensity and passion of the Bible chapter:

King James translation,
Song of Solomon 3:3–4:
The watchmen that go about the city
found me:
To whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul
loveth?
It was but a little that I passed from them,
But I found him whom my soul loveth:
I held him, and would not let him go.

Rowe:

Then to the *Watch*, Impatient, thus I Cry:
Tell me, O tell! Did not *my Love* pass by?
When loe, a *Glimpse* of my approaching
Lord,
A *Heaven* of *Joy* did to my Soul afford:
So the dark Souls confin'd to endless Night,
Would smile, and wellcome in a beam of Light.
I *Clasped* him, just as *meeting Lovers* wou'd,
That had the stings of *Absence* understood:
I held him fast, and *Centring* in his *Breast*,
My *ravish'd Soul* found her desired *Rest.*

(Marshall, 123–24)

This extrapolation of the biblical lines heightens the emotion, increases its physicality, and sets up the prophetic ending, as the bride says, "a *Prince* [than] *Solomon*, more *great.*" The typological elements become more prominent from canticle to canticle.

Canticle 4, like chapter 4 of the Song of Solomon, begins with the bridegroom's romantic speech. The Bible chapter ends with a single verse spoken by the bride, "Let my beloved come into his garden. . . ," but Rowe inserts the response earlier and makes the bride more active: "Were I a *Garden*, every *Flower* in me / Should proudly yield their *conscious Sweets* to thee" (Marshall, 126). Canticles 5 and 6 remain true to the scriptures but develop the seeking, lovesick voice of the bride even as words associated with Christ increase the typological potential of the poem ("my dear Lord," "among the Lilies"). *Canticle 2.8, 9*, another poem of surrender, is written in dramatic heroic couplets, using rhetorical questions to drive the poem to its visionary ending:

> Is it a dream? or does my ravish'd ear
> The charming voice of my beloved hear?
> Is it his face? or are my eager eyes
> Deluded by some vision's bright disguise?
> 'Tis he himself! I know his lovely face,
> It's heav'nly lustre, and peculiar grace.
> I know the sound, 'tis his transporting voice,
> My heart assures me by its rising joys.
> He comes, and wing'd with all the speed of love,
> His flying feet along the mountains move;
> He comes, and leaves the panting hart behind,
> His motion swift and fleeting as the wind.
> O welcome, welcome, never more to part!
> I'll lodge thee now for ever in my heart;
> My doubtful heart, which trembling scarce believes,
> And scarce the mighty ecstasy receives.
>
> (Marshall, 206–7)

Here is an example of the habitual reading of the scriptures providing religious poets with a vocabulary and set of images somewhat different from the secular "moping owls" and "murmuring brooks." "His flying feet along the mountains move" imaginatively brings together New Testament imagery that conceives Christ as man and divine.

That her collection of poems with more than half of its pages devoted to the

canticles came out in the same year as a new edition of Thomas Sternhold and John Hopkins's *Whole Book of Psalms* and Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady's *New Version of the Psalms of David* (1696) is a sign of the times. A vigorous tradition of biblical paraphrase existed, one in harmony with the century's delight in "what oft is thought but ne'er so well expressed." Writer and readers took pleasure in the challenge of versifying and dramatizing something attempted by theologians, poets, and scholars.

Publishing paraphrases showed considerable self-confidence. The Psalms especially provide a place where poetic skill can be easily compared. They had been musically and memorably rendered in the King James translation of the Bible and by other contemporary poets, including Thomas Carew, Vaughan, Milton, and Addison.[20] Even as a young woman Rowe did not flinch at such competition and dared to try Psalm 23; her paraphrase can be compared with Addison's paraphrase, written when he was forty and established as a respected poet:

Rowe:

The Lord is my defence and guide,
My wants are by his care supply'd:
He leads me to refreshing shades,
Thro' verdant plains, and flow'ry meads;
And there securely makes me lie,
Near silver currents rolling by.
To guide my erring feet aright,
He gilds my paths with sacred light;
And to his own immortal praise,
Conducts me in his perfect ways.
In death's uncomfortable shade,
No terror can my soul invade:
While he, my strong defence, is near,
His presence scatters all despair.
My spightful foes, with envy, see
His plenteous table spread for me:
My cup o'erflows with sparkling wine,
With fragrant oils my temples shine.
Since God hath wond'rous mercies
shew'd,

Addison:

I

The Lord my Pasture shall prepare,
And feed me with a Shepherd's Care:
His Presence shall my Wants supply,
And guard me with a watchful Eye;
My Noon-day Walks he shall attend,
And all my midnight Hours defend.

II

When in the sultry Glebe I faint,
Or on the thirsty Mountain pant;
To fertile Vales and dewy Meads,
My weary wand'ring Steps he leads;
Where peaceful Rivers soft and slow,
And the verdant Landskip flow.

III

Tho' in the Paths of Death I tread,
With gloomy Horrors over-spread;
My steadfast Heart shall fear no Ill
For thou, O Lord, art with me still;
Thy friendly Crook shall give me Aid,
And guide me through the dreadful Shade.

And crown'd my smiling years with good;
The life he graciously prolongs,
Shall be employ'd in grateful songs;
My voice in lofty hymns I'll raise,
And in his temple spend my days.[21]

IV

Tho' in a bare and rugged Way,
Through devious lonely Wilds I stray,
Thy Bounty shall my Pains beguile:
The barren Wilderness shall smile
With sudden Greens and Herbage
crown'd,
And Streams shall murmur all around.
(Bond, *Spectator*, 4:51 [26 July 1712])

As Donald Davie says, Addison's version is "a poor thing."[22] Not only are Rowe's lines smoother and more graceful but she manages to remain closer to the spirit of the psalm *and* allow a glimpse of the psalms' meaning for her. She is demonstrating what Watts and people of her time demanded—strict adherence to the scripture—as well as a level of diction and a standard of more than respectable poetic achievement. Addison is distracted by what he calls the pastoral and "those Allusions which are usual in that kind of Writing" (4:50), while Rowe shows impressive confidence in her idiom and prosody. Addison is following the masculine tradition, in which the psalm was apprehended as "the seminal lyric in the Christian pastoral tradition."[23]

The contrasts between the King James psalm's "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want" and Addison's "The Lord my Pasture shall prepare / And feed me with a Shepherd's Care" are emphasized by Rowe's "The Lord is my defence and guide, / My wants are by his care supply'd." She explicates what the Christian needs from her shepherd-God and, like the psalm, leaves "wants" general and expansive. Perhaps Addison meant "Pasture" to symbolize heaven, but the result is to rob the psalm of its expansiveness. Rowe's love for nature individualizes her paraphrase, even as she maintains the elevation appropriate for her subject: "Thro' verdant plains, and flow'ry meads," "Near silver currents rolling by," she writes, adding a sensory-rich dimension to the spare "He leadeth me beside the still waters." Her combination of close paraphrase and personalization is adept in the lines that rework "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies," which Addison converts into the bland, awkward, "Thy Bounty shall my Pains beguile." Rowe adds immediacy by making the enemies hold a human feeling, spite, and with a concrete reference: "My cup o'erflows with sparkling wine."

Both Rowe and Addison would have known the version in Sternhold and

Hopkins, whose opening is quite lovely and illustrates the appeal of the metrical psalms:

> My shepherd is the living Lord, nothing therefore I need;
> In pastures fair, with waters calm, he setteth me to feed.

There is a sermonlike section:

> He did convert and glad my soul, and brought my mind in frame.
> To walk in paths of righteousness. . . .[24]

"Living Lord" and the reference to conversion and the "mind in frame" telegraph the didactic purpose. The Tate and Brady version is closer to the King James but not as musical. It begins, "Since God does me, his worthless Charge, / Protect with tender Care." Rowe seems to have had their version in her mind, as she improves on Addison's paraphrase of the King James "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Tate and Brady modernized: "By him, in sight of all my Foes, / My Table's richly spread, / My Cup o'erflows with gen'rous Wine, / With pretious Oyls my Head."[25] Hers is obviously better poetry and without the infelicitous image of a head overflowing with oil.

Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) attests to the sustained enjoyment of paraphrased psalms. To show Pamela off, Mr. B. stages a competition between Pamela's version of Psalm 137, the great psalm of exile and oppression, and what he calls "the common Translation," Sternhold and Hopkins. Richardson figures it into the text three times, first when Pamela writes it on a Sunday when she is not allowed to go to church and second, after their engagement when B. comments on reading it in her journal.[26] He sees that she has written it with her situation in mind and compliments her on turning the "heavy curses" of the conclusion of the psalm into a hope for his repentance and salvation, thus replacing an Old Testament structure of feeling with a New Testament one. Her entire poem is included in the text at the point when she wrote it, and, finally, Richardson dramatically repeats it in the competition, which is a part of the episode of the opening of B.'s chapel. He has Mr. Williams, the clergyman, read two verses of Sternhold and Hopkins and has B. read the same two stanzas of Pamela's paraphrase. The group compliment hers for being "pretty" and having a "beautiful Simplicity," and say that it is evidence of her "Genius and Accomplishments" (318–19). Richardson is careful to set this performance before experts, which he assumes to include many of his readers. Pamela's father, who had tried to teach "Psalmody" in his failed school and continued to practice it at home, has taken the place of "a

practised Parish Clerk" and led the Sternhold and Hopkins Psalm 23 during the service; Lady Jones asks for another psalm during the service, and the group—family, Mr. Williams, and neighbors—talk about psalms over the meal that follows and enjoy another psalm at the evening service. Pamela's adaptation is framed among psalms, therefore, beginning with the 23rd, a psalm of faith in deliverance, and the 145th, which includes the line, "The Lord preserveth all them that love him." The group are struck by Pamela's allegorizing Mrs. Jewkes into Edom's sons and herself into captive Israel, the typological rendering of her situation, and, as B. had been, of her transformation of the conclusion. Thus, Pamela demonstrates a cultivated skill, the ability to write poetry, in a way that contributes to her characterization as intelligent, charitable, and pious. The reworking of this psalm into the text of the novel is also part of the thematic importance of B.'s repentance.[27] The mixed group—some not so pious—find the comparative reading an entertaining part of the visit, as undoubtedly people did in social gatherings throughout the century, and Richardson counts on the familiarity of the metrical psalms and the activity for its credibility and even interpretability.

At the end of the century, *A Collection of Hymns and Psalms, for Public and Private Worship* (1795), edited by Andrew Kippis et al., devotes an entire section to Psalm 23. It includes Rowe's and Addison's versions, as well as James Merrick's, John Byrom's, and one labeled "Pope's Collection." Rowe's is without equal. Susannah Harrison, a later poet with a high reputation whose *Songs in the Night* (1780) remained in print well into the nineteenth century, has a hymn on Psalm 23, verse 3, alone, "He restoreth my soul." In Harrison's book this hymn follows one of the few that acknowledges her constant pain, "Chastened and not killed" (Hymn CV), which plays upon temporal and eternal day and night. In one verse she writes, "Such Pain and Sickness wastes my Strength, / . . . / My Spirit dreads the tedious Length, / As Morn or Night comes on," and in the final verse she imagines singing "thro' endless Day." Harrison has a meditation, Hymn XIV, based on the first verse of Psalm 23.[28] The reworking of the same psalm or verses in different forms is characteristic of many other poets. Rowe's peaceful *Canticle 1.7* offers an unusual example; it includes the lines,

> O, tell me in what verdant mead,
> Or flow'ry vale, thy flocks are fed;
> Or by what silver current's side,
> Thou gently dost their foot-steps guide?
> . . . . . .

They follow thee, they hear thy voice,
And at the well-known sound rejoice:
O, let me too that music hear. . . .
(*Works*, 1:136)

The first three lines are obvious reworking of lines in her early paraphrase of Psalm 23, and they indicate the way she endlessly used images and ideas from the Bible to express different moods and experiences.

Within this fertile field for experimentation, many women took the same Bible verse, the same idea, or a specific emotion and versified it over and over in different ways, often shifting forms or moods subtly or drastically. As Ralph Cohen says, "The revising and rewriting of received hymns and psalms supported the composition of short forms dealing with personal experience," and he recognizes in how many ways these very personal poems were "embedded" in longer forms of poetry.[29] These statements certainly describe Rowe. She enjoys imagining various situations and dramatizing them in a variety of poetic forms. *A Hymn. In imitation of Canticle v.vi.vii* is one of many poems in which she imagines searching for "My absent Lord." In lively quatrains, she creates a variety of global scenes:

I've oft invok'd him in the shades,
By ev'ry stream and rock;
The rocks, the streams, and echoing shades,
My vain industry mock.

I trac'd the city's noisy streets,
And told my cares aloud;
But no intelligence could meet
Among the thoughtless crowd.
. . . . . .
I'd follow him o'er burning sands,
Or where perpetual snow,
With horrid aspect clothes the ground,
To find my Lord, I'd go.

Nor stormy seas should stay my course,
Nor unfrequented shore,
Nor craggy *Alps*, nor desart wastes
Where hungry lions roar.
(*Misc. Works*, 1:131–32)

"No intelligence could meet" brings to mind newspapers such as the *True Domestic Intelligence* and Rowe's contemporaries' eager seeking of information. The expansiveness — the ranging through time and space — that is characteristic of the best eighteenth-century poetry easily accommodates the religious sense of infinite time and domains, both solar systems and heaven, and combines here with the creation of an individual perspective with a personality and a time-bound, colloquial vocabulary.

The paraphrases, often in straightforward, dignified language, contrasted with the ornamented language of many classical forms and surely helped move English poetry away from artificiality. Chudleigh's *The Fifteenth Psalm Paraphras'd* begins, "Who on thy Holy Hill, my God, shall rest, / And be with everlasting Pleasures blest?" Idiomatic turns identify the poems with the time in which they were written, even as they communicate their view of the world through the most common metaphors of Christian discourse, as Chudleigh does here: "He who lives thus, who this his Bus'ness makes / . . . / Like some strong Tow'r unshaken shall remain, / And all the Batteries of Fate sustain" (Ezell, 155-56). The quite contemporary "business" becomes located in the eternal warfare so familiar to people of the period. What Rowe learned from paraphrases of psalms and segments of scripture can be seen in the forms she made distinctively her own. Drawing upon the rich English religious poetry of the Metaphysicals and the poetry and ideas of the Bible, she creates new kinds of poetry. With a very few exceptions the religious verse of the Metaphysicals is elevated over eighteenth-century poetry because of its intensity and energy. Overall, this is quite unfair to the women poets, and the best of them throughout the century feel free to draw upon these poets, as Finch had done in *The Spleen.* Elizabeth Tollet, the carefully educated daughter of a commissioner of the Royal Navy, has an especially broad range of paraphrases, as *Paraphrase on the Nicene Creed*, *Destruction of Babylon. From Isaiah*, *Chap. xiii*, and *Hymn to the Paraclete* (all 1724) suggest. Some of these poems, as well as her *My own Epitaph*, a skillful, unusual poem, show the influence of the Metaphysicals in their portrayal of the paradoxes of the Christian faith and the believer's states of mind through fraught verse and wrenched word order:

> Falsly this wounded Stone pretends to show
> The Inmate of the silent Cell below;
> 'Tis not that Being, rational, combin'd
> Of finer Clay, and the celestial Mind;
> But mould'ring Dust to its first Bed resign'd.[30]

Part of Rowe's experimentation and development as a poet was to paraphrase some of Crashaw's religious work, and it is striking how frequently she expresses religious ecstasy through erotic imagery, as he did.[31] She identifies *A Hymn to the Name of Jesus* as a paraphrase of Crashaw's poem by the same title. She begins,

> Awake, my Soul! my Glory rise and sing!
> Awake, and all thy sacred Ardour bring!
> While for unusual Flight I spread a tow'ring Wing.
> Awake, my Lute! proud of thy glorious Theme;
> Let each harmonious String,
> Tremble with rapt'rous Joy, and speak the mighty Name![32]

She omits Crashaw's Miltonic invocation, "I sing the Name which None can say," and begins with his line 13: "Awake, My glory, Soul, (if such thou be . . .)." The intellectual and aesthetic appeal from these poems comes from the project Crashaw announces: "Wake Lute and Harp / And every sweet-lippt Thing / That talkes with tunefull string" (lines 46–48). Rowe echoes, "Assist me ev'ry gentle Sound, / Which studious Art has found; / You that speak with Silver Strings, / Or swell with tuneful breath." The poets then create verse after verse of musical lines about music. Crashaw's poem concludes, "Wellcome dear, All-Adored Name!" Rowe's poem becomes much more personal, repeating "Jesus" four times in eight lines: "*Jesus*, our conqu'ring Chief! they cryd, / *Jesus!* aloud the sounding Skies reply'd." Her conclusion resembles that of *The Vision*, as the "bright Musicians of the Skies" join in and "instruct" the earthly singers. Her ode is somewhat more regular than Crashaw's, and the poem takes inspiration from his but is wholly original and entirely hers.

Rowe habitually uses sexual imagery for a variety of subjects, including friendship and religion. In *The Wish* Rowe writes of her desire to give her heart entirely to God: "Thy love should all my ravish'd soul possess."[33] In *To Celinda*, a friendship poem in the Dunton collection, she joins the subjects with the imagery: "So Angels love and so they burn / In just such *holy fires.*"[34] This technique, familiar to readers of Metaphysical poetry, became increasingly characteristic of Rowe's work, but it was present from the beginning. Although some modern critics have used this aspect of her poetry to stigmatize her, she was doing what her century set as a standard. Addison, for instance, praised the use of diction and metaphors in religious verse that "gives a Force and Energy to our Expressions, warm and animate our Language, and convey our Thoughts in more ardent and intense Phrases."[35] *Force*, *warm*, *ardent*, *intense*—these were words that came to be con-

tested, associated positively with the sublime and negatively with the Evangelicals. In addition to the interest they hold as forms of personal and social recreation and their significance as exercises in and tests of prosody, the paraphrases offer an alternative history of fashions in religious expression and beliefs about the appropriate relationship to the Deity.

The Hymn as Personal Lyric

The great form of modern English religious poetry is, of course, the hymn. It is crucial to remember that by the time of Rowe's death in 1737 poets who wrote hymns were writing in an entirely different context from those writing in 1696 or 1715, and those in 1780 yet another context. The classical hymn, often in ode form, was reputed to have been written as early as Homer, and Edmund Spenser's *Fowre Hymnes*, James Thomson's *Hymn on Solitude*, and Egerton's *Exstacy* are in this tradition. Spenser, Ben Jonson, and Milton wrote hymns as odes, and according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one definition of *hymn* was "religious ode," originally meaning "a song or ode in praise of gods or heroes." An adequate history of eighteenth-century poetry and of the hymn ought to take into account the considerable differences among the poetic kinds that eighteenth-century people considered within the broad category "hymn." The slow acceptance of congregational singing and then its revolutionary growth during the Evangelical movement are subtle threads woven through this story as well.[36]

We, however, think of hymns almost exclusively as songs for congregational worship, and their reputation as poetry has shrunk along with the category "hymn." One of its most important modern critics, J. R. Watson, writes, "It is known as a verse species of some kind, but it has traditionally been regarded as a second-rate poetic form, limited in its aims and expressions, and disfigured by sentimentality, inflexible metres, self-congratulations, and religiosity. . . . It has been regarded as primarily religious and only marginally and accidentally as a part of literature."[37] Once again, the twenty-first-century practice, use, and opinion about a poetic form complicate assessment and understanding. Today, for instance, all critics remark on the constraints that writing hymns for congregational singing imposes—in everything from meter to vocabulary to content. David Morris describes them memorably as characterized by "a chastity of style" and quotes Watts on the need to keep metaphors "to the Level of vulgar Capacities."[38] Madeleine Marshall and Janet Todd assert that hymns are "easily recognized by the metrical limits within which the hymn writer labored and by the short lines

and stanzaic repetition required of congregational song." Scholars continue to point out that hymns must be "doctrinally correct and spiritually edifying."[39] Later hymns would have to fit into the liturgies of each denomination.

Not only can these perceived constraints be disputed by referring to any hymnal but the majority of hymns written in the eighteenth century were not composed for performance. They were written for all the reasons that people write poetry, and many times as personal devotional exercises. David Morris points out that *The Spacious Firmament on High* is an important part of Addison's *Spectator* essay on devotion and faith and modeled on Psalms 19:1–4.[40] One of Rowe's most reprinted books is *Devout Exercises of the Heart in Meditation and Soliloquy, Prayer and Praise* (1737). There are important distinctions, too, between the hymns composed by those who stand in pulpits and those who sit in pews. For instance, one of Rowe's begins the concluding verse in a manner reminiscent of Watts's *O God our hope in ages past:* "My God, my hope, my vast reward, / And all I wou'd possess." In contrast to Watts's hymn, hers uses the first-person singular pronoun, and she usually creates an individual standing before her God rather than a community of believers rehearsing their faith. Watson, Benson, and Marshall and Todd, like almost all of the authors of books on hymns, are writing about *congregational* hymns, and, even more restrictively, about those that somehow found a place in hymnals.

The women poets of Rowe's generation had a rich variety of respected, traditional forms of "hymns," and several of them tried the same theme or scriptural passage as a classical ode, a metrical psalm (or in that form), *and* what we would today call a hymn. A major shaping influence was the metrical psalms, known to all through Sternhold and Hopkins's *Whole Book of Psalms* (published first in 1562, with many subsequent altered editions) and Tate and Brady's *New Version of the Psalms of David.* They were sung-chanted in Anglican and other churches, and even the Catholic Alexander Pope wrote (somewhat wryly), "Hopkins and Sternhold glad the heart with Psalms" (Epistle 2.1, line 230). This tradition also produced, for instance, translations of the Song of Solomon and other passages in the Bible that came to be included in hymn books and recognized as examples of "Hebrew" poetic skill. Beginning in 1562, metrical versions of creeds, the commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the *Te Deum*, and *Veni Creator* were included, and these encouraged the paraphrasing of other creeds and, for example, the Beatitudes.[41]

As the definition of *hymn* narrowed,[42] as belief in hymns' educational value

grew, and as congregational singing became commonplace, hymns were usually written with music in mind, and many hymns were written in common, short, long, or sometimes proper meter.[43] In intellectual circles, a number of opinions affected hymn writing. Some were part of a movement described as an "acrimonious setting up of psalmody against hymnody,"[44] but others argued that God "taught Poetry first to the Hebrews" and that the Hebrews produced a canon alternative to the Greeks' and Romans' that "either supersedes related classical genres or creates superior competing forms."[45] Joseph Trapp contended that religious odes were "the boldest of all other Kinds [of poetry], full of Rapture, and elevated from common Language the most that is possible."[46] Those based on the Hebrew were often claimed to be superior because they reflected the "God of order," the antithesis of Pindaric formlessness.[47] John Donne had called David a better poet than Virgil, and it was not uncommon to find statements such as, "In ISAIAH . . . we have all the majesty of Homer; in JEREMIAH, all the pathos of Euripides; in EZEKIEL, the terrible graces of Aeschylus; and in the short prophecies of JOEL, NAHUM, and HABAKKUK, all the pomp and rapture of Pindar."[48] Rebecca Manners's progress-of-poetry poem ends similarly:

> Beauties more sublime remain,
> Where the holy seers of yore
> Pour prophetic wisdom's lore,
> And to rapt devotion prove
> Heaven's unceasing truth and love.
> Whether glowing hymns reveal
> Royal David's fervent zeal,
> Or Isaiah's lofty mind
> Threats the ruin of his kind,
> Or in softer, sweet strain,
> Jeremiah tells his pain, . . .[49]

These poets and critics were careful to say that the Hebrews were superior as poets, as artists able to move the passions, not just because of their religion. Some even insisted that the Greeks and Romans had learned from the Hebrews. In 1710 the Bishop of St. Asaph defended the Sternhold-Hopkins Psalms over other versions, especially Tate and Brady's, by continued references to the ways it adhered to "Hebrew" artistic principles.[50] Addison, in an essay calling for improvements in church music, maintained that English had "received innumer-

able Elegancies and Improvements, from that Infusion of *Hebraisms*" (Bond, *Spectator*, 3:514 [14 June 1712]).

Then as now, ordinary people ignored most academic disputes, and these lines of thought simply validated the models offered by all of the traditions. Among the common opinions were that "the Hebrew poets are more forcible and emphatic, more 'elevated and divine,' " than, for instance, Plato and that Pindar was closest in spirit to the Hebrew poets at their most elevated and musical.[51] Poets therefore drew upon the biblical and classical poetry and went about their writing unhampered. Even poets whose surviving *oeuvre* is primarily secular left evidence of trying the hymn, and the ode, especially in Pindaric variations, was a respected and popular choice. Some of the best eighteenth-century odes are religious.[52] For example, *The Extasy* may be Egerton's best poem. A carefully composed hymn, it shows considerable understanding of the formal demands of both odes and eighteenth-century hymns. It begins:

> Mount, Mount, my Soul on high,
> Cut thro' the spacious Sky;
> Scale the great Mountainous heaps that be,
> Betwixt the upper World, and thee.[53]

The opening address and use of repetition are conventional in hymns, and she uses them to good effect. Watson, who has analyzed thousands of hymns, points out that strong first lines call for attention and signal that something meaningful is about to be said. Many use imperatives and the soul as metonymy, as this hymn does.[54] The expansive perspective that surveys the world of God's creations and man's misuse of them is also common. For example, Egerton takes us "Deep in Earths center":

> With Grief and Wonder I behold,
> The Noble, but mischevious [*sic*] Gold;
> Oh! with what Toil, and mighty Pain,
> Men the inchanting Mettle gain.
> This Tyrant Clay Lords it o'er human kind,
> Tho' they themselves in dirt, at first the Monarch find.[55]

The ode is divided into six marked stanzas. The odd-numbered verses are optimistic and use images of rising; the even-numbered ones, like the one quoted above, take the viewer down into scenes of darkness, misery, chaos, and sin. The final verse begins:

Then I espy'd from far,
Troops of shining Men, ingag'd in War,
Their artful Weapons, are with Rage imploy'd,
And Man, by Man, is Savagely destroy'd:
Poor mercenary Slaves they die,
But seldom know for why.

(10)

This verse is in marked contrast to the one before, which is a lovely retirement verse including the lines,

The pleasing Fields, awhile detain'd my sight
With a serene delight:
The flowry Meads, with various Colours dy'd,
And smiling Nature, in her verdant Pride;
Here ancient Woods, and blooming Groves,
(Fit recesses, for celestial Loves) . . .

(8)

Egerton demonstrates great control of image and tempo, and sound and sense are carefully married to each other. She deftly slows the poem as she shifts from mines and war to the spaciousness of the oceans, verse 3's "great Waters of the mighty deep," and the security of the garden. She concludes with an image that unites them all and brings herself, a very mortal individual, back into the center of the poem.

As might be expected, Finch was among the best at taking advantage of the varied traditions flowing into eighteenth-century hymns. Her *Hymn* is a carefully crafted ode that has spatial expansiveness coupled with pointed, specific contemporary references. It, like some of Watts's odes, evokes, even as it controls the impulse toward, the religious sublime. Her hymn begins, "To the Almighty on his radiant Throne, / Let endless Hallelujas rise!" Each verse commands a different realm or group to praise God and moves to a critical eye on her own time:

Praise Him, ye Monarchs in supreme Command,
By Anthems, like the *Hebrew* Kings;
Then with enlarged Zeal throughout the Land
Reform the Numbers, and reclaim the Strings,
Converting to His Praise, the most Harmonious Things.

Ye Senators presiding by our Choice,
And You Hereditary Peers!
Praise Him by Union, both in Heart and Voice; . . .
(Reynolds, 262–63)

Like the other hymns by women poets, this one returns to the individual poet, a poet suddenly coming down from the sublime and visionary that is sanctioned by the religious subject to consciousness of her own insignificant, mortal life. Finch's is especially interesting because her identity is still that of a poet:

From my contemn'd Retreat, obscure and low,
As Grots from whence the Winds disperse,
May this His Praise as far extended flow;
And if that future Times shall read my Verse,
Tho' worthless in it self, let them his Praise rehearse.
(264)

Finch makes a direct statement of two of the purposes of religious poetry, the fostering of religious attitudes and the encouragement of individual meditations.

Egerton and Finch, like Rowe, were writing at a pivotal moment in the history of the English hymn. A new, broad recognition of the personal benefits of hymn writing came before the acceptance of congregational singing. Chudleigh's rhythmical hymn *The Offering* rehearses her duty to God and pledges such things as, "I'll strive with you my Zeal to show, / With you I'll strive to pay / Some little Part of what I owe" (Ezell, 142). Other touted benefits included meditation, greater understanding of the scriptures, and cultivation of appropriate religious attitudes toward all the experiences of life. Inseparable from understanding writing this way is conceiving reading along the same lines, and it is obvious that many hymns written after singing in church became common, even by great congregational hymn writers such as Watts and Cowper, were never intended to be sung. Even Sternhold and Hopkins's preface admonished that the metrical psalms were recommended for "all sortes of people privately for their solace & comfort."[56]

The desire for psalms that were better poetry and in more accessible, appealing language continued to grow. In 1712 Addison had written rather crankily, "I could heartily wish there was the same Application and Endeavours to cultivate and improve our Church-Musick, as have been lately bestowed on that of the Stage" (Bond, *Spectator*, 3:514 [14 June 1712]). The work of George Wither,

Henry Dod, George Sandys, Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, Traherne, and Vaughan, all of whom wrote artistic, creative hymns, continued to cast a long shadow, and these poems ranged from the elevated and complex to the simple and moving. The 1697 *Select Hymns from Mr. Herbert's Temple* reminded readers that Herbert had sung some of his pieces to the viol and made them suitable for singing in common meter.[57] Among the contemporary poems that Tate included in *Miscellanea Sacra* was Herbert's *Convert.* Tate's dedication to Princess Anne in 1696 gave his timely purpose: "The Reformation of Poetry, and Restoring the *Muses* to the Service of the Temple, is a glorious Work."

The most important aspects of this pivotal moment, however, were the rise of individualism and subjectivity in the general populace. Perhaps the most dramatic contribution of Isaac Watts and other turn-of-the-century hymn writers was to shift the voice from God's word to humankind to the human being speaking to God. Watts "produced a whole cycle of religious song which his own ardent faith made devotional, which his manly and lucid mind made simple and strong, which his poetic feeling and craftsmanship made rhythmical and often lyrical, and which his sympathy with the people made hymnic."[58] Watts was a dedicated theorist of hymnody. In *The Doctrine of the Passions*, for instance, he says that the minister must "try all methods to rouze and awaken the cold, the stupid, the sleepy race of sinners; learn all the language of holy jealousy and terror, to affright the presumptuous; all the compassionate and encouraging manners of speaking, to comfort, encourage and direct the awakened, the penitent, the willing and the humble."[59] Therefore, the whole range of human feelings and experiences opened to hymn writers. And Rowe, who came to be almost constantly in dialogue with her God, increasingly found the hymn a congenial form.

In contrast to her 1696 *Poems*, which had no hymns, the 1739 *Miscellaneous Works* includes thirteen hymns in volume 1 alone. They are mostly in common meter rhyming *abcb*, and some of them recall her friendship with Isaac Watts. *To Mr. Watts, on his Poems Sacred to Devotion* uses his favorite *abab* rhyme, and she praises him for his beautiful, "transporting" verse — clearly singling out his poetic ability as well as the spiritual effect of his verse:

> Unto the new-found realms which see
> The latter sun arise,
> When with an easy progress he
> Rolls down the nether skies.
>
> (1:71)

Her hymns are descriptive and reflective, designed more for meditation and, perhaps, education than for singing. Although *On the Divine Goodness* has a conventional kind of opening, the lines are too long, and the diction actually calls attention to the demands of writing congregational hymns. "Extol him with uninterrupted joy," she writes, and *uninterrupted* is not one of the words chosen to express this common thought in successful hymns. The mind boggles at singing, "In all thy wond'rous paths I gladly trace / Indulgent goodness, and stupendous grace." In this hymn of meditation, however, she is free to ask an angel to "lend me his melodious lyre" and to imagine both God's "mysteries" and hell's ocean of fire (*Misc. Works*, 1:123–24). She is attempting to convey the ineffable, "stupendous" grace — grace that "stupefies" in the seventeenth-century conception, freezes and silences, holds immobile.

Some of Rowe's hymns are reminiscent of Addison's majestic *Spacious Firmament on High* and some of Watts's great hymns. Hymns with the perspective of Hymn IV, "To thee, my God, I hourly sigh, / But not for golden stores," are more typical than the expansive "Thou didst, O mighty God, exist / E'er time begun its race, / Before the ample elements / Fill'd up the voids of space." The highly personal, even isolated voice she uses sometimes creates powerful emotions, such as the wonder illustrated in *Hymn on the Sacrament:*

> And art thou mine, my dearest Lord?
> Then I have all, nor fly
> The boldest wishes I can form
> Unto a pitch more high.
> (*Misc. Works*, 1:36)

This verse is a defining statement of the religious sublime, for here contemplation of Jesus's life and sacrifice evoked in the first line brings about and permits the human being's "boldest" wishes elevated to the unspeakable, the sublime, pitch.

As John Mason Neale said, hymns "must be the life-expression of all hearts,"[60] but first they were the "life-expression" of an individual. It could be argued, then, that lying before our eyes for more than 250 years, hymns have been the eighteenth century's personal lyric, that form that allegedly has been missing. Joshua Scodel writes, "The personal lyric, conceived as the expression of a highly individualistic voice and subjective feeling, was not a major form between the early seventeenth-century flowering of the 'metaphysical' lyric and the lyric resurgence of the late eighteenth century and Romanticism."[61] In fact, many hymns

were deeply personal, individual, subjective, even eccentric lyrics that, along with their strictly religious themes, explored a wide range of experiences, incorporated short personal narratives, and even reflected on the life of a writer. It was common for them to be recognized and praised as "the language of the Heart," as Pope did Cowley's (Horatian Epistle 2.1). Ralph Cohen reminds us in his essay in the *Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* that *lyric* was believed to be "synonymous with the sublime ode" (209). Addison observed that "there is no Passion that is not finely expressed in those parts of the Inspired Writing, which are proper for Divine Songs and Anthems" (Bond, *Spectator*, 3:514 [14 June 1712]). Watson argues that when religious poetry was added to hymn books, "it added *personal* and devotional elements to the tradition of biblical paraphrase" (emphasis mine). He points out that much of it, like the poetry of Donne and Herbert, displayed intense engagement with the Bible, the world, the conduct of life, *and* the inner self. Thus, hymns are the "expression of all the varieties of human religious experience, the dark places of the soul, the exaltation, the sense of penitence, and the sense of joy."[62]

In a time when many people felt that they were in a personal relationship with God, religious poetry can be expected to express every human emotion. As Kathryn King has pointed out, religion for these poets was more than "faith, spirituality, doctrine, or devotional experience"; it was "their most basic sense of identity, the 'context within which people give *meanings* to their actions and experiences, and make sense of their lives.'"[63] The wide variety of religious responses to situations reflect beliefs and personalities and even classes and, to some extent, gender. A familiar example of the contrasts is the accepting, resigned attitude of Robert Knox in his *History of Ceylon* and the adversarial, personal, questioning Robinson Crusoe that Daniel Defoe creates. Elizabeth Rowe's relationship to God is not Anne Finch's. Although the differences are stark, more than prosody separates, for instance, Rowe's poems on her husband's death and her *Hymn of Thanks* and Finch's *On Affl[l]iction*. Rowe resolutely controls the references to divine purpose in her poems on her husband and restricts herself to praise for her recovery. The lines in *On the Death of Mr. Thomas Rowe* are mild indeed: "Why has my heart this fond engagement known? / Or why has Heav'n dissolved the tie so soon?" Personal as her relationship to God is, she seems to see suffering as a characteristic of the world rather than a test or mark of God's action toward an individual, what Finch calls, "the rod, that does adoption shew." Finch's begins, "Wellcome, what e're my tender flesh may say, / Welcome affliction . . ." and concludes,

> Affliction is the line, which every Saint
> Is measur'd by, his statue taken right;
> So much itt shrinks, as they repine or faint,
> But if their faith and Courage stand upright,
> By that is made the Crown, and the full robe of light.
> (Reynolds, 19)

After the opening admission of fragility and fear, the rest is exceptionally tough minded. The measuring, especially the concrete image of the line shrinking as the "saint" repines or faints, is reminiscent of Donne and his courageous relationship to the demands of his religion. Ann Messenger contends that Finch's religious poetry communicates her modesty and awareness of her sex in contrast to Pope's. She points out, for instance, that in *Messiah* he "asks for, and apparently receives, the same inspiration from the seraphim as that granted to Isaiah," something she believes Finch would never represent.[64] In contrast, Rowe frequently imagines being received and tutored by the angels. Lines about earthly suffering and loss quickly give way to images of restoration; the letter left upon her death for the Countess of Hertford concludes, "Adieu, my most dear friend, till we meet in the paradise of God" (*Misc. Works*, 1:xliv).

The writing of religious verse is routinely described as "acceptable" and therefore "enabling" for women. Elaine Hobby argues that the "ideal female author," "an image of desirable femininity which can embrace the identity of poet," is created in these texts, and Harriet Guest writes that "religion makes available to women a sense of social duty that overrides the modesty appropriate to femininity."[65] I believe this commonplace should be reexamined and problematized. Only by falsifying their verse can it be seen to contribute to the "sanitized, bloodless, and intensively marketed construct of the apolitical literary lady."[66] The language of these poems is often strikingly "unfeminine." Finch hailed Death, "O King of Terrors," and wrote unflinchingly: "My Bus'ness is to Dye, and Thine to Kill" (Reynolds, 270). Rowe could address God, "So now, great God, wrapt in avenging *Thunder*, / Meet thine and *William's* Foes, and tread them *groveling* under." Barbauld too used raw language, some drawn from the scriptures, and contemporary comment, here on the French Revolution and the 1794 Polish uprising in protest against the Russo-Prussian Partition:

> The dogs of hell your steps pursue,
> With scoff, and shame, and loss;
> The hemlock bowl 'tis yours to drain,
> To taste the bitter cross.

E'en yet the steaming scaffolds smoke,
  By Seine's polluted stream;
With your rich blood the fields are drenched,
  Where Polish sabres gleam.[67]

Rowe and Barbauld represent the end points of an unbroken line of Nonconformist women poets who used religious verse fearlessly for social and political protest. Unfashionable and difficult as it may be, we need to identify the Nonconformist women and take into account their particular, long-lived tradition. For instance, experiences of imprisonment and alienation are exceptionally persistent; Bunyan can write "He who would valiant be" with the chorus "To be a pilgrim," and more than one hundred years later, in *Hymn. "Ye are the salt of the earth,"* Barbauld describes the godly: "In every faith, through every clime, / Your pilgrim steps we trace." Moreover, the orientation to publishing was distinctly different, as Nonconformists' sense of audience was broad, and the emphasis on literacy for women strong. N. H. Keeble has documented that subscription publishing to raise capital for publication and create markets was "almost entirely the innovation of nonconformist stationers."[68] Dissenters also took for granted a responsibility to write and make available useful texts.[69]

In the second half of the century women wrote many hymns that were performed publicly, as Mary Darwall and Mary Masters did. *In this world of sin and sorrow*, by Judith Madan, is typical of her gently melodious poetry. Three of Masters's hymns are still included in hymnals: *Be the loving God my friend*, *O my adored Redeemer! deign to be*, and *'Tis religion that can give / Sweetest pleasures while we live*.[70] The latter is a very simple hymn in proper meter that ends in almost a childlike way: "Let me then make God my friend, / And on all his ways attend." Ann Murry chose to open her *Poems on Various Subjects* (1779) with *To the Supreme Being*, which has simple language and a pleasing meter reminiscent of Isaac Watts. It ends,

Father of Light! Jehovah! Holy King!
To whom th' angelic host enraptur'd sing,
To thy Omnipotence, let increase rise,
From Earth thy footstool, to thy Throne the Skies!
(4)

Many of her religious poems are simple and beautiful and show her experimenting with form, as do *The Beatitudes*, which is in smooth heroic couplets, and *On the Birth of our Blessed Saviour*, the final poem in her collection. Helen Maria Williams, another Dissenter reared on congregational singing, wrote several

lastingly popular Congregational hymns, including *Whilst thee I see*, *protecting Power!* and the especially fine ode *My God! all nature owns thy sway*. Williams had an affinity for the sublime, and the latter is rich in evocations of times of day and seasons.

Susannah Harrison's sequence of hymns is even more impressive. Hymn LXVI, *By Grace are ye saved*, combines spiritual interpretation and narrative in iambic quatrains in common meter:

> No more of works I vainly boast,
> Nor so employ my tongue;
> Jesus alone is all my trust,
> Free grace my only song.
>
> 'Twas not in me to seek his face,
> Nor did I ask his love,
> Till he by his all-powerful grace
> First drew my thoughts above.
>
> My free-will chose the beaten road
> That leads to endless pain,
> I walk'd with pleasure there, till God
> Inclin'd me to refrain.
>
> He saw me helpless and undone,
> A rebel dark and blind,
> And led me to his blessed Son,
> A better way to find.
>
> By whose rich grace alone I stand,
> Kept by his mighty power,
> Through which I trust e'er long to land
> On the celestial shore.
>
> Then shall I leave all sin's remains,
> And view his glorious face,
> And sing in more exalted strains
> The freedom of his grace.[71]

Each hymn is based on a specific Bible verse, and there is hardly a book in the Bible from which Harrison did not draw inspiration for her hymns. She turned verses from Isaiah, Romans, Hebrews, 1 Kings, Proverbs, Matthew, Ezekiel,

Galatians, and even Deuteronomy into hymns that were generally happy. In quatrains usually rhyming *aabb* she described the love and joy she found in her faith. In this form that freed women to write about the sublime, she wrote hymns, such as *God thundereth marvellously with his Voice*, that are especially good at dramatizing God's power and the Christian's tranquil interior:

> The Rain descends, the Tempest rise —
> My Soul, his Majesty adore!
> Jehovah's Voice sounds thro' the Skies,
> While Lightnings flash, and Thunders roar.
>
> I sit becalm'd while others fear,
> The God of Thunder is my All;
> It is my Father's Voice I hear,
> Nor shall I by his Thunder fall.
>
> No: While his Lightnings flash around,
> Altho' the Earth's Foundation move,
> I stand secure on Faith's firm Ground,
> I rest in his unchanging Love.
>
> Nothing shall fright my Soul from God,
> Should he the Skies this Moment rend,
> He is my only safe Abode:
> My Rock, my Refuge, and my Friend.
>
> (33)

Very much a part of a Christian community, Harrison has a hymn called *Longing for Public Worship*, in which she asks to be healed "That I may serve and praise Thee too, / O bring me to thy House again!" (80–81). Her *Going to the Lord's Supper, after long Confinement* celebrates the shared experience, as well as the scriptural story's personal meaning. Harrison had become a servant upon the death of her father, when she was sixteen, and shortly thereafter she became an invalid. When she takes as her subject something with autobiographical potential, like the pool at Bethesda, she is especially surprising:

> Here is a Fountain deep and wide,
> A Fountain rich and free;
> With healing Virtue well supplied,
> For Sinners such as me.
>
> (82)

At one time, 79 of Harrison's 133 hymns were in print in various hymnals published in the English-speaking world, and two of her hymns, *Begone, my worldly cares, away* and *O happy souls that love the Lord*, are among the most widely included in modern hymnals.[72] To page through her hymns is to see how well she understood the possibilities and the conventions. Hymn after hymn begins with a strong "hailing" and a communal thought and experience.

> To us, to us a Child is born,
> Arise and hail the glorious Morn:
> Come, let us praise the God of Heav'n,
> To us, to us a Son is giv'n!

she begins Hymn VIII on Isaiah 9:6 (pp. 7–8). The sense of a community and the effective use of repetition to establish and then heighten the mood are typical of her work.

Almost all of the women wrote hymns to thank God for recovery from an illness, and they are a minor genre in themselves. Almost any sickness was a life-threatening event in the eighteenth century, and so these poems are both set pieces and records of experience and expressions of religious feeling. The best of these are true personal lyrics, and since many were conceived as thank offerings to God, they evince considerable thought and effort. Rowe writes in *A Hymn of Thanks*, "To thee, my muse, some tuneful gift would bring, / And humbly consecrate her noblest verse" (*Misc. Works*, 1:94). Finch's *An Hymn of Thanksgiving after a Dangerous Fit of Sickness* rises to unusual lyric musicality. Much of her poetry is Augustan in its privileging of statement, but this poem compares with the mellifluous *Happynesse of a departed Soul:* "Blest is the Soul which loos'd from sordid Earth / Soars to the Mansions of her Heavenly Birth."[73] All of the verses of *An Hymn* are perfectly alike in rhyme and meter, and each of the twelve verses except the first begins or ends with a different use of *Allelujah*, among them "With Allelujahs now I come," "In Allelujahs praise," "With Allelujahs I aspire," "I Allellujahs pay," and "By Allelujahs freed" (*Wellesley*, 37–39).

There are, of course, dozens of plodding poems on this subject, but the best poets found ways to write eloquently and originally. Mary Barber's *To Dr. Richard Helsham. Upon my Recovery from a dangerous Fit of Sickness* begins appropriately, "For fleeting Life recall'd, for Health restor'd, / Be first the God of Life and Health ador'd." The poem is notable, however, for the way it develops an argument that Helsham's wisdom and skill is the result of his location between and partaking of both heavenly and earthly domains. Nature opens "her mazy Sys-

tem" to him, and he has the learning of Ratcliff (John Radcliffe, famous physician) and Aesculapius (the Greek god of medicine); he never flies God's "Throne too far" or presses too close to it, and best of all, he always finds ways to "praise thy Maker, and to bless thy Kind."[74] This imaginative poem is both one of thanks for recovery and a serious statement about the practice of medicine in a primitive time.

Just as these hymns were not intended for group singing, neither were most of the hymns in ode form. Just a little later the hymn and the ode would be opposed to each other in many of the ways the Psalms and hymns had been earlier. Watts, for example, explains that he removed the poems and stanzas that were odes in *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1707), the book that followed his *Horae Lyricae* (1706).[75] Although most poets continued to write both, they made clear distinctions. The ode remained a popular form for religious poetry, and some of the most dedicated poets continued to adapt the form to paraphrase psalms, as Leapor does in *An Ode on Mercy: Imitation of part of 145th Psalm*, in which the verses have two pentameter lines, then four hexameter, then two pentameter. She also bases other odes on the Bible and the Apocrypha, as she does *The Crucifixion and Resurrection. An Ode* on the Wisdom of Solomon 3:1–6. Toward the end of the century some poets wrote books of hymns, all composed for singing, and the writing of children's hymns became a female domain. Anne Steele, for instance, wrote dozens of hymns that are still sung by Baptists, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld wrote *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781) and saw eighteen of her other hymns chosen for hymn books.[76] The best of the late-century women wrote hymns that are still sung today. Samuel Rogal lists eighteen of Barbauld's, two by Amelia Opie, and Helen Maria Williams's paraphrase of Psalm 74:16, 18, *My God, all nature owns Thy sway*, and *While Thee I seek, protecting power*. The latter is a beautiful evening hymn that closes, "My steadfast heart shall know no fear; / That heart will rest on Thee." Written in common meter, it has been sung to a variety of tunes, such as *Simpson*, *Brattle Street*, and *Beatitudo*. At one point in the mid-twentieth century it was included in hymnals published for the Unitarian, Methodist, Baptist, Moravian, Episcopal, Mennonite, Lutheran, Universalist, Evangelical United Brethren, and other Protestant churches.

With the equating of hymns with singing, as Marshall and Todd observe, "the irregular, highly original, or otherwise extraordinary perception is unacceptable."[77] Although I would qualify this statement with *usually*, it seems clear that the split between hymn writers and poets like Christopher Smart became increasingly wide from the mid-eighteenth century on. The effects of the growth

of congregational singing can be found in a variety of intriguing places, for example, in the influence of J. F. Lampe's compositions for Wesley's hymns in the *Hymns for the Great Festivals and Other Occasions* (1746) and in the rising number of hymns in proper meter. Thus, to some extent, hymns became more varied, but the division between hymns for singing and those for reading continued to grow. As poets ceased to try to achieve both in a single poem, both types benefited.

Religious Poetry as Subversive Narrative

Rowe's earliest literary and publication efforts depict an ambitious writer very much aware of what her peers were writing. Published in the year before she died, *The History of Joseph* (1736) reveals her mature dramatic and stylistic ability, as well as her keen engagement with genres her pious reputation would seem to rule out, including the novel. This long narrative dramatization of Genesis 30–46 is a contribution to the history of prose fiction and important in the development of the metrical tale, for it looks back to the mixed-genre poetry of the Renaissance and forward to the long poetic narratives of the Romantics.

The enjoyment of long, narrative poems based on incidents in the Bible is definitely a lost taste, except perhaps in the case of Milton's great epics. Abraham Cowley's *Davideis* and Matthew Prior's *Solomon*, however, had avid readers throughout the eighteenth century, and good poets continued to write such poems. Prior's creative variations within basic heroic couplets[78] and the unremitting way he treats Solomon's fruitless search for happiness through knowledge, pleasure, and power earned it praise such as William Cowper's for both subject and "execution."[79] With few exceptions such poems seem pedestrian or tedious to us, but metrical tales increased in popularity and played an important part in Romantic poetry. They certainly help us understand contemporary thought.

Recognizing the sensational possibilities of the story of Joseph, Rowe does not hesitate to write melodramatically sentimental scenes (as when Joseph pleads with his brothers), to linger over violence, and to write visionary, airy passages. She departs far more freely from the scripture than writers did in the paraphrases or even Milton did in *Paradise Lost.* She milks the sale of Joseph by telling it twice, once when it happens and once when the brothers guiltily recollect it in Egypt. Her *Friendship in Death* had shown her ability to use the conventions of the sexy stories that were popular on stage and in the amatory fiction of her time, and *Joseph* does the same.[80] Rowe does not take long to introduce the first of four stories of forbidden love and to blend material from a variety of secular and religious, ancient and modern, high and low sources.

She orchestrates these diverse genres to make *The History of Joseph* generically friendly and newly enjoyable and relevant to her time. The invocation and other sections have a Miltonic sweep that gives the poem magnitude. Book 1 includes a council of pagan priests called to prevent the coming of Christ. It is obviously modeled on Milton's council of fallen angels, and it portrays what hell has become since then: "The sons of God thus with the race of man / Were mingled; hence the giant stock began." She puts her learning to good use. The priests propose various plans, and then Mithra speaks,

> Mankind by willing steps to ruin move,
> Their own wild passions their destruction prove,
> But the most fatal is forbidden love.
> Old Jacob boasts a daughter young and fair. . . .[81]

Mithra represents the ancient Persian sun god. Mithraism was a source of great concern to the early Christians, for it was both similar to and more popular than Christianity. Tertullian, the Roman theologian, speculated that it had been invented by the Devil to mock Christian rites.[82] Mithra's plan is to "fill [the pagan Canaanite Shechem's] youthful breast with mad desire" and, "by fraud, or force," lead Shechem to assault Jacob's daughter, which will provoke the Hebrews to avenge the rape. The pagans at the assembly are to join the Canaanites to "abolish this detested line." The Mithraites baptized their followers with honey, and Moloch, who is pleased with the plan, says, "Revenge and bloody faction are my care, / . . . thine be the soft affair" (289). So begins this first story of forbidden love, and soon it sounds much like a play by Delarivière Manley or a novel by Eliza Haywood:

> But ah! too late, she finds herself betray'd
> To *Shechem*'s pow'r, a lost defenceless maid;
> A captive in his treach'rous courts retain'd,
> By fraud seduc'd, and brutal force constrain'd,
> Her name dishonour'd, and her nation stain'd.
> In vain with tender sighs he strives to move
> The injur'd fair to voluntary love;
> The strictest rules of chastity she knew,
> With all that to her great descent was due;
> But what with gentle arts he fails to gain,
> His wild desires by violence obtain.
>
> (292)

The council of pagans especially fear Joseph, and the introduction of his story in this way underscores his importance in Christian history. Through her learning and broad perspective, Rowe stretches to explain the significance of the story of Joseph in biblical and human history.

The central story of forbidden love is that of Potiphar's wife, "Sabrina," for Joseph. Her story is set in ironic juxtaposition with that of Semiramis, told by Sabrina's maid. Semiramis, the virtuous heroine, tells her husband, "Love with heroick courage fires my heart. / To follow you thro' raging seas I'd go, / O'er burning desarts, or perpetual snow" (310). Dressed as a man, she follows her husband into battle and engineers the victory, but because of her bragging husband, who reveals her sex, she becomes the object of King Ninus's lust. As a result, her husband commits suicide, but Semiramis goes on to triumph and to build the city of Babylon. In the next book of the poem, the lustful, scheming betrayer, Sabrina, tries to seduce Joseph. She says, "Consent at last to love's enchanting joys, / While pleasure calls thee with her tempting voice" (323). Alun David points out that Rowe has constructed a sophisticated example of typological poetry, a major, learned tradition of religious writing, that makes Semiramis a type of Joseph.[83] Sabrina, however, has been moved by the story of Semiramis in the wrong way;[84] she becomes aroused and declares her love for Joseph. Ignoring Semiramis's example of constancy and courage, she becomes the Ninus figure. Semiramis dies happy, while Sabrina dies haunted and terrified, just as Ninus had. This technical move, as all types do, reinforces the strength of biblical truth and moral example, but it also helps the reader understand and empathize more fully with Joseph's position, temptation, courage, and triumph. Moreover, the reader is more likely to remember important details that are not central to the immediate story, for example, that Joseph, like Semiramis, is responsible for the building of a great city.[85]

Rowe gives dreams, which are so important in the Bible and in contemporary thought, full treatment in the poem and matches language to content masterfully. Waking and dreaming are not distinguished in Sabrina's visions of "airy terrors" and "Pale ghosts with wide distorted eye-balls" (332), for these ugly images are with her regardless of her state of consciousness. Rowe's description of Joseph's vision of the Israelites' destiny and deliverance from Egypt includes lines that clearly show her enjoyment in writing various kinds of verse. She lingers over the description of the angel—"Such wings th' *Arabian* Phoenix never wore, / Sprinkled with gold and shading purple o'er" (326)—and economically and adeptly gives a summary of Moses's negotiations with Pharaoh in lines such as these:

> Across the ground his wond'rous rod he throws;
> The rod transform'd a moving serpent grows,
> Unfolds his speckled train, and o'er the pavement flows.
> A dazzling train of miracles ensue.
>
> (327)

In contrast, the dreams of the two servants imprisoned with Joseph and of Pharaoh, because they are not angelic visions and because the dreamers are ordinary men, are in unornamented, concrete language. Even Pharaoh's dream, while recounted in more dignified language, lacks any of the elevated spirituality of Joseph's.

Joseph is similar to the novel heroes and heroines whose physical appearances and sensibilities contradict their apparent social positions. "His mind beyond his years compos'd and grave; / His aspect . . . / Something that mark'd him for a nobler fate," Rowe describes him (Marshall, 305). He rises to a position worthy of both in exile, and the ending dramatically confirms his identity. Sold into slavery and then imprisoned, Joseph keeps an alien but true faith in a strange land. Finch's poetry bears strong traces of her Royalist experience; Rowe's *Joseph* is an expression of major Nonconformist themes. Over and over, he experiences the unpredictability of life and changes in fortune, adversity and arbitrariness, that seem to be the way of the world to Dissenters.

The familiar suffering exile of Nonconformist literature, Joseph appears to be an entirely virtuous man. As N. H. Keeble argues, however, the "great theme of nonconformist writing" is personal regeneration, and surprisingly, Rowe makes this Joseph's plot, as well as that of his brothers and individual Egyptians. Like Milton in *Samson Agonistes*, Rowe brings regeneration and redemption to the fore.[86] Every reader would know what will happen when the all-powerful Joseph gazes at his brothers, recollecting "Their parting malice and inhuman rage," "To just revenge his swelling thoughts engage." Yet Rowe's dramatic line suspends the familiar narrative and reveals the need for Joseph's act of forgiveness and therefore redemption. The conclusion thus stretches beyond reconciliation of the immediate situation to allude to biblical history and Joseph's completed quest for fulfillment beyond this world.[87] Joseph must struggle again for tranquillity of mind and fulfillment, which in the eighteenth century meant a social role worthy of a person's abilities as well as a state of virtue. *The History of Joseph* also looks forward to the novels of the second half of the century, as it concludes with several highly sentimental scenes. David is reunited with Benjamin: "Then clasping round his youngest brother's neck, / No longer strives the gushing tears to

check" (Marshall, 354–55). The final verse is the father's speech, "I'll see his face, and close my aged eyes; / Content."

The long metrical tale was notable for digressions, and therefore poets were exceptionally free to incorporate various genres and subjects, as Rowe had with her dramatic speeches and additional love stories. For example, Chudleigh's *Song of Three Children Paraphras'd*, a Pindaric based on the Song of the Three Holy Children, recites major episodes in the Old Testament, describes the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, and paraphrases the hymn that composes most of the Apocryphal book.[88] The part Chudleigh is using is the hymn to God, "The Praises of Creation," sung by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who is called Azariah in the Apocryphal text. The hymn calls on all creation to praise God and includes verses beginning in this way: "O earth, bless the Lord, / sing his praise and exalt him for ever. / Bless the Lord, mountains and hills." Chudleigh takes this concept and sweeps through all of heaven, earth, and the cosmos asking each realm to praise God. Elizabeth Tollet also adapted this book in *The Three Children in the fiery Furnace.* Hers begins with a heroic couplet narrative that then praises the son in individual couplets, each with a trailing third line to introduce the chorus, beginning, "Bless."[89] Mary Leapor's metrical tales and paraphrases have unusual range and also demonstrate the century's decided taste for Old Testament subjects with their raw passions and tense situations embedded in personal and political narratives. Among Leapor's are *David's Complaint, ii Samuel, chap. 1; The Death of Abel; Job's Curse and his Appeal;* and *The Tale of Cuchi. From 2 Samuel, chap. xviii.* She selected dramatic exchanges and embroidered them, often with digressive, virtuoso displays of various kinds of poetry. *The Tale of Cuchi* opens with a near scripturally literal exchange between King David and Cuchi, the man sent to tell David that his son Absalom had been killed. What follows is a description of the harmony between nature and events on earth; the sun, "sullen Orb receiv'd a crimson Dye" "Clouds of Arrows hide the darken'd Sky," and Absalom dies "In the dark Center" of the forest.[90] The poem acknowledges Joab's disobedience in killing Absalom and ends with an appeal to fathers and orphans, who will understand David's grief over his traitorous child.

These tales often swoop upon a very small moment in the biblical text and demand sympathy for those who are the objects, not the subjects. Ann Yearsley's *On Jephthah's Vow* demands that infants and virgins be weighed against military victory and mistaken, if not triply evil, vows. Jephthah has vowed to sacrifice the first person who greets him should God give him the victory over Ammon, and his beloved, only daughter is the one. Yearsley is strongly accusatory from the begin-

ning: "What sudden impulse rushes thro' the mind, / And gives that momentary wild resolve / Which seals the binding vow?" Ninety lines later she writes,

> Hence, dupes! nor make a Moloch of your God.
> Tear not your Infants from the tender breast,
> Nor throw your Virgins to consuming fires.
> He asks it not; . . .

The Miltonic half-line emphasizes that Jephthah's God is not hers. His vow has been wrong because it promises a murder, bargains with God, and mistakes the very nature of God. The poet continues scornfully:

> what boasting fool,
> To great Omnipotence a debt can owe?
> Or owing, can repay it? Would'st thou dare
> Barter upon equality! Oh, man!
> Thy notion of a Deity is poor, . . .

The poem is a powerful critique of patriarchy, an ideology that casts God in its bloodthirsty image and puts no value on women and infants. Jepthath's daughter is a strikingly strong, courageous, and determined woman. Not only does she ask for time to "lament her virginity," therefore her unfulfilled *life*,[91] but she asks that her female friends go with her. "On she goes, / Leaving her father fix'd in speechless grief," Yearsley writes. The daughter has assumed this right and simply walked out. This poem and the scripture on which it is based demand a comparison with the story of God's command to Abraham that he sacrifice his son Isaac. Isaac, who has a name, of course, is spared, and Jepthah, unlike Abraham, describes the calamity as his, not that of his child. Jepthah enjoys killing and has been "trembling and eager" and "ambitious," while Abraham has passed the test of his faith, concluding with God's promise: "And in thy seed shall all the nations be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:18).

Donna Landry has speculated that women found these dramatizations of Bible stories "the most hospitable form in which eighteenth-century women poets could approach questions of urgent philosophical and political importance."[92] Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Miriam* (1613) might be an important precedent for them. Miriam, who represents the priestly and politically legitimate claim to the Judean throne, witnesses the murders of her uncle, her brother, and her grandfather and is executed for "adultery," loyalty to her God and family instead of to her husband Herod.[93] This closet drama, the first original play by a

woman published in England, is deeply political and, like the biblical narratives by eighteenth-century women, foregrounds a woman in an all-powerful patriarchal world. Certainly some of the most stark condemnations of patriarchy and, in fact, of men are in these narratives. Mary Jones's *Story of Jacob and Rachel attempted* begins as a light piece governed by Jones's desire to amuse her friend Lady Henry Beauclerk, who had asked her to try versifying the story. The poem gives a leisurely picture of Rachel that identifies her with music and dance:

> She led the flocks, or tript it to the fife;
> When summer suns burnt fiercely o'er their heads,
> She drove the wantons frisking to the shades;
> Or when the merry pipe rejoic'd the vale,
> Led up the dance, or told the jocund tale;
> Chearful and blythe she pass'd the day along,
> And ev'ry valley echo'd with her song.[94]

"Frisking," "merry," "rejoic'd," "jocund," "Chearful and blythe"—the happy words pile up. Jacob enters and becomes delightfully lovesick. A woman's fantasy of equality unfolds as he helps her with the flocks, grows rich, and asks her father for her. They agree that he will work for Laban for seven years for her, and Jacob thinks, "The Sire as courteous as the Daughter kind." Selecting the medieval word, Jones prepares the reader to understand that Laban will violate the rules of honor, hospitality, and vertu—all definitions of manhood. Laban substitutes his older daughter, aged with "long-frozen breast," and the poem turns serious. Laban responds to Jacob's enraged accusations of betrayal with, " 'tis our country's custom." Laban's country is not the joyous, musical place of Rachel's youth or the idyllic world of happiness and labor that the lovers have shared. Jacob has been like a woman, and the masculine world is one of exploitation and commerce. Rachel is transformed into "Source of his woes, and partner of his care." With the phrase "partner of his care" Jones begins to return Rachel to the subject position and the final triumph: "She bare a son, / And thence enjoy'd his Love *unrival'd*, and *alone*" (emphasis mine).[95] Even here Jones is writing about the patriarchy, because it is the bearing of a son, not a daughter, that assures Rachel's position.

These narrative poems could take daringly personal and subversive turns. Perhaps the most striking is Elizabeth Hands's *Death of Amnon* (1789), on 2 Samuel, chapter 13, the story of David's son Amnon's raping his sister Tamar.[96] The opening lines unabashedly proclaim the subject: "The Royal youth I sing, whose sister's charms / Inspir'd his heart with love."[97] Amnon speaks imme-

diately, and he recites the same story of lawless love that Rowe had used, that of Shechem's rape of Jacob's daughter:

> Dishonour'd Dina, how her brethren rag'd!
> Each took his sword, the princely ravisher,
> And every citizen a victim fell
> To their just fury. I'm an Isra'lite;
> Shall I forego this high prerogative,
> And plunge myself and sister into ruin?
> . . . . . .
> Better my lov'd companions pass my grave,
> And shed a tear to think I died so young
> Than shun me living as a vile reproach
> To nature, royalty, and Israel.
>
> (2)

Written in Miltonic blank verse, its narrative passages and dialogue are prose-y, smooth, efficient, and almost completely unornamented. She keeps her reader engaged by creating dread and suspense, as when Amnon and his evil friend Jonadab agree:

> To-morrow be it done, said Jonadab.
> Amnon reply'd — to-morrow is the day.
>
> (10)

The poem is carefully constructed with contrasting cantos. The first presents forbidden passions and evil schemers, and the language is unadorned; canto 2 presents Tamar, and here the language is feminine and mellifluous. Among the beautiful imagery is Tamar dropping the wreath of flowers she is weaving and hurrying through the fields and gardens to make a cake for Amnon, who is pretending illness:

> Down dropt the unfinish'd wreath; she skimm'd along
> O'er the parterres, nor stay'd to find the path.
> Her sweeping garments gently brush'd the flow'rs;
> The ripest shedding, strew'd the way she went
> With variegated fragments. So the breeze
> Whisks o'er the forest, and some shatt'ring leaves
> Fall gently rustling thro' the shrubs beneath.

The next cantos are also composed to show contrasts in content and technique. Canto 3 is filled with dialogues, and 4 with emotional soliloquies. In canto 3 Amnon describes himself, "An hell within me burns, and deep remorse, / That never dying worm, now gnaws my soul." Jonadab is bent on destroying Amnon, who has banished him, "Hence from my sight, thou basest, worst of fiends, / Nor ever dare approach my presence more." Absalom, Tamar's brother, is consumed with rage and desire for revenge, but like the heroes in so many plays by women, he insists to Tamar that she is guiltless, "No blame is thine; / My sister still in heart is undefil'd" (26). The canto ends with Tamar accepting an image of virtuous, peaceful retirement with Absalom, a retirement that sounds much like Rowe's life:

> But here recluse and tranquil ever 'bide;
> Regaling in that never-cloying feast,
> Th' internal calm of an untainted mind.
> This none can ravish from me; this is life.
> . . . . . .
> . . . the great Jehovah's name
> Shall fire my theme, and fill my heav'nly song.
> (28)

In canto 4 King David, informed by Jonadab, confronts Amnon but quickly turns inward, recollecting his own crimes with Bathsheba and her husband. "Shame, remorse, confusion and despair" "now the hapless Amnon haunt, / While in th' avenging hand of Absalom / Death lurking lies." These hidden states of mind, conveyed through soliloquies, persist for two years, until Jonadab helps Absalom come up with the plan to kill Amnon at the annual sheep-shearing feast.

The poem shows how subversive and relevant the form can be. As Caroline Franklin has observed, Hands reveals the way lust, which might have been conquered, is transformed by male bonding and rivalry. First, Amnon imagines another man enjoying Tamar, and later he reacts to Jonadab's "ridiculing [his] scruples as effeminate.[98] Hands concludes canto 1 with a soliloquy by Jonadab, who is rejoicing in how evil triumphs even in good men, a common psychological opinion of process in the century:

> From step to step insensibly they go,
> Till so familiariz'd by custom, they
> With calmness will transact the very things,

> Which but to mention, ere they launch'd so far,
> They'd shudder at.
>
> (10–11)

Finally Jonadab is able to motivate a man feeling qualms about committing a terrible crime by contrasting scruples to masculinity. The poem ends with Amnon stabbed, the guests knocking over tables to flee, and a final image of Amnon's blood mingled with the wine that has been poured, drunk, and also spilled in such profusion at the feast.

Hands, a former servant, has actually created an alternate story to that of Amnon, Tamar, David, and Absalom, and hers is a powerful social critique implying strong moral and social ramifications. Jonadab, the ambitious servant loyal only to his interests, and Absalom's servants, bedazzled by love and loyalty, present two sobering faces of master-servant relationships.[99] This theme begins in a passage in which she contrasts the arbitrary, blustering imperiousness of the bad master to the discrimination and justice of those who earn loyalty, good service, and "spread serenity" (24–25). Shockingly, this passage that has portrayed Absalom as exemplary becomes the foundation for an indictment of abuse of power. Before the feast Absalom looks "at his spotless hands":

> Must these be dy'd in blood? a brother's blood?
> No, I have servants, they shall give the blow.
> . . . . . .
> . . . Then called, he those he lov'd:
> They came.

He tells them that he trusts them and has chosen them "for my accomplices this day." The servants, "more by love than duty bound, / All bow'd obedient to his sov'reign will" (39–41). They commit the murder. Both the self-interested and the loyal, therefore, are implicated in the crimes.

Between the metrical tales by Rowe and Hands are a number of carefully crafted poems that carry out the same subversive acts. Tollet's "musical drama" *Susanna*, like a number of the narratives by women, depicts male lust and power and emphasizes their effects on women. The elders, whose sexual advances Susanna has rejected, threaten her with a very eighteenth-century punishment: "Death of Fame by publick Voice." They accuse her of adultery with a young man, and she is tried before the community. The prophet Daniel demands to cross-examine the elders, and they differ about the tree under which they sur-

prised the lovers.[100] The oratorio is explicit about the significance of hierarchies of power. Susanna laments,

> Thus the Falcon from above,
> Shoots upon the tender dove:
> While hid in Silence lies
> Her gentle Mate,
> To mourn her Fate,
> She trembles, bleeds and dies.
> (164)

Without Daniel, Joachim would have had to witness his innocent wife's fate, unable to do anything to protect her from the false allegations (or from the elders' attention). Finch's *Poor Man's Lamb* adapts the story of David's lust for Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah. In the prophet Nathan's analogous tale, the lord who heartlessly takes the favorite lamb is portrayed as "led by no Law, but Will."[101] Jayne Lewis points out that the poem "dwells on" the "consequences" for Bathsheba but that finally "Nathan's parable dethrones Bathsheba and the forms of authority that she represents" and destroys a political structure based on passion.[102]

Women figure prominently and are often given unusual subjectivity in these biblical tales adapted to allow women to expose the ways power operates and its consequences.[103] The result is a set of texts that use the liberating potential of Bible stories to point out and implicitly condemn the degree to which men see and treat women, even women they love, as objects. Nothing, for instance, in Finch's depiction of Bathsheba suggests that David's declaration that "with his Heart, the Kingdom too is hers" compensates for the loss of her husband. Within the range of women's poetry, these biblical narratives have the most unflattering and daring descriptions of how men appear to women. An agitated David is excited and aroused by imagining Uriah's murder and Bathsheba in his bed. The lines are nearly masturbatory: "Now spent the alter'd King, in am'rous Cares, / . . . / Heedless of all their Censures He retires, / And in his Palace feeds his sacret Fires" (Reynolds, 229). Tollet's elders cannot accept that she does not want them or that she is a faithful wife, and out of their vanity they create an imaginary young rival. Jephthah loses his daughter because he cannot imagine a relationship with God that is different from his relationship with the men with whom he covets, bargains, and fights, or a God different from such men.

These poems provide a place for work with complex human feelings and

motivations and with experiences often deemed unacceptable as women's subjects. Anne Killigrew's *Herodias's Daughter presenting to her Mother St. John's Head in a Charger* is a shocking example. In the voice of a seductress, the daughter compares St. John to a lover and herself as triumphing over him. The poem begins, "Behold, dear Mother, who was late our Fear, / Disarm'd and Harmless, I present you here; / The tongue ty'd up. . . ." And it continues, "As Lovers use, he gazes on my Face, / With Eyes that languish, as they sued for Grace; / Wholly subdu'd by my Victorious Charms, / See how his Head reposes in my Arms." Particularly horrible because of the easy, conversational heroic couplets and familiar images, such as that of the male lover resting his head on his beloved, the poem celebrates shared female triumph, "will, and solidarity." This voice, like Esther's, Tamar's, and Judith's, made a new range of powerful voices available to women poets. Dorothy Mermin has written that such poems "redefine woman's position" to allow a subject "who desires and speaks."[104] Although it is not about religious poetry, the statement may be especially apt for it. It opens entirely new, extended registers, from the monstrous voices that Killigrew and Rowe create to the outraged, betrayed voices of wronged women. Some women turned their narratives into oratorios, as Tollet *(Susanna)* and Clara Reeve *(Ruth)* did. Again, they are in good company and have important precedents; for instance, Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, an oratorio first performed in 1739, was based on Exodus and has been called "the greatest Pindaric poem in the English language."[105]

As *The History of Joseph*, *Susanna*, and canto 2 of *Amnon* suggest, the long tradition of pastoral contributes beauty and, often, contrapuntal themes to these narratives.[106] Jephthah's daughter says that before she dies, "yet will I slowly rove / O'er yon high mountain, till the moon hath spent / Two portions of her light."[107] Although nature and especially the moon are traditional images of woman's exclusion, they are also images of God's world. The high mountains are images of transcendence and God's presence, as scripture often invokes it ("I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" [Psalms 121:1–2]). Before *Joseph*, there were many pastoral narratives that orchestrated genres and thereby contributed to the breaking down of adherence to established poetic forms. Some of these poems, too, parallel the innovations of novelists in content and method. Surely they are the most alien group of religious poems today,[108] and most of the women poets of the first decades of the century wrote them. If eighteenth-century hymns have been neglected and misunderstood, it can be no surprise that pastoral and narrative religious poetry by women and men has been all but ignored.

Poets' great familiarity with pastoral forms contributes to their ability to adapt its uses and structures to their individual visions and purposes,[109] as in Rowe's *Pastoral on the Nativity of our Saviour*; *In imitation of an Italian Pastoral*[110] and Finch's *Between Menalcus and Damon, on the Appearance of the Angels . . . on Our Saviour's Birth*. Both of these poems are in a long English tradition that includes the popular mystery play *The Adoration of the Shepherds* and Milton's *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*. Finch and Rowe were admirers of Torquato Tasso, the great Renaissance Italian who wrote *Rinaldo* (1562), the pastoral play *Aminta* (1573), and *Jerusalem Delivered* (1575), often identified as the greatest poem of the Catholic Reformation. *Jerusalem Delivered* combined the religious themes of the First Crusade with tales of love and adventure in a chastened style intended to avoid the excesses of Ariosto and was admired throughout the century.[111] Rebecca Manners, for instance, devoted more lines to Tasso's poetry and gave more specific references to *Jerusalem* than to any other Italian Renaissance poet in her *Review of Poetry*. Rowe's poem strongly shows his influence, while Finch's pastoral bears more traces of English Renaissance and Metaphysical pastorals.

A Pastoral between Menalcus and Damon is one of Finch's masterpieces. In a surprising move she has the shepherds remembering rather than witnessing the angels. Her shepherds imagine what a glorious song David would have written: "How had he then, above all others skill'd, / In raptures sung, of Prophecys fulfill'd?" She weaves throughout Damon's poem the phrases from chapter 9 of Isaiah that Handel's *Messiah* (1742) would make so unforgettable, among them, "To you a Child is born, to you a Son is giv'n, / Prayses they gave, and titles did encrease, / Wonderfull! Councellour! and Prince of Peace!"[112] In contrast, Rowe has the shepherds and angels speaking at the time of the event and predictably bringing the infant the best lamb from their flock. She too versifies the lines from Isaiah. Uranio, the most prophetic of her three shepherds, says, "The great Messiah born! Transporting sound! / . . . / To us is born a Saviour and a King."[113] Rowe's pastoral has an imaginative extravagance, especially in the descriptions of the natural world that were associated with the pastoral drama of Tasso and Guarini, which her title invokes.[114] Palemon says, for example, "And, in the depth of winter, spring appears, / For lo! the ground a sudden verdure wears" (Marshall, 150).

A central purpose of these eighteenth-century dramatizations was to highlight emotional experiences that extrapolated on texts and had the potential for deepening faith. Rowe has the angels tell the shepherds,

Come on, we'll lead you to the poor abode,
Where in a manger lies th' incarnate God;
Reduc'd among the sordid beast to rest,
Who all the spacious realms of light possess'd;
And he whose humble ministers we were,
Becomes a tender virgin's helpless care.
(Marshall, 151–52)

The use of strongly contrasting words ("incarnate," "sordid") and situations is typical of the poems that emphasize Christ's sacrifice; many select the Crucifixion and dwell rather sensationally on it and on Jesus's physical suffering. In *Ecce Homo*, for instance, Tollet writes, "See! how the sanguine Streams run down, / And bath his heav'nly Face with Gore" and "Wretch! can'st thou think on this, and yet not feel / The thorny Wreath, the Biting Steel, / Which pierc'd his Hands and Feet, and gor'd his tender Side!"[115] It is an especially artful ode in which each of the four stanzas moves back and forth between a vividly rendered representation of Christ on the cross and the observer/reader/sinner. Each movement is dramatic, as this one in the second verse is: "Behold the Man! O! yet behold! / And gaze till Tears have made you blind" (23).

Rowe's pastoral, again like many others, is set in a Miltonic universe; among other signs, the angels rejoice that Christ's coming will "our ruin'd numbers" repair, that is, replace the rebellious angels who had left heaven. Rowe's poem approaches recitative with its short, highly musical speeches. In contrast, Finch's pastoral is a much more fully imagined poem and exploits many of the important pastoral structural conventions. The setting, the shepherds, and some of the dialogue approach realism, and that is part of the poem's immediacy. Her sense of human history and what the birth of Christ meant is at least as powerfully communicated as Rowe's. The opening of *Damon and Menalcus* is graceful and unhurried:

Damon, whilst thus, we nightly watches keep,
Breaking the gentle bands of downy sleep,
Least to the greedy wolves, that hungry stray,
Our wand'ring flocks, become an easy Prey,
Do thou, for song renown'd, some one recite,
To charm the season, and deceive the night.
Whether, thou Sampson's nervous strength willt chuse,

And in bold numbers, exercise thy Muse?
Or if to tender subjects more enclin'd,
That move soft pitty, and dissolve the mind,
Thou Joseph's story, rather wilt rehearse,
And weep o're Benjamin, in melting Verse,
Begin, whilst list'ning to thy voyce we lye,
Nor mind the whist'ling winds, that o're us fly.
So! Jesse's Son, upon these plaines, when young,
Watch'd o're his flocks, and so, the Shepherd sung
(Reynolds, 215–16)

Damon takes up the praise of David and reminisces about the night Jesus was born:

So, rais'd indeed, that youth, his voyce devine,
Fir'd with the promis'd glorys of his Line,
As if, on Heavens high Mount himself had trod,
And seen his Seed, ascend the seat of God.
Oh! had he lately, on our pastures been,
And heard the tydings, and the Vision seen,
When Heav'nly Spirits, cloath'd in Robes of light,
Broke the thick Shaddows, and expell'd the Night,
Proclaiming Peace below, and Praise above. . . .
(216)

"But hold, a Shepherd . . . / Must chuse a subject suited to his Reed, / Nor with mistaken strength, attempt the Sky," Damon says and offers instead the story of the first shepherds, that of Isaac and Rebecca. Menalcus persuades Damon to "attempt that Nobler song" (217). Some critics have seen Finch here commenting on the heirarchy of subjects and poets and therefore upholding the tradition of pastorals engaging nature versus art.[116] Rowe and other pastoral poets have their shepherds inspired by heaven, but Finch maintains that ordinary humans can "sing" beautiful songs. As Damon reaches the part of the story where the angels sing, the various threads of the history of pastoral are woven in:

But ne're by me, the Vision be expresst
By the Suns rising, from the radiant East.
But ne're by me, their voyces be compar'd
To Pans own notes, when on the mountains heard.

But ne're by me, be that transcendent show,
Liken'd to ought we glorious call, below.

(218)

Here, at line 97, she repeats line 35: "To you a Child is born, to you a Son is given." Some of the century's most remarkable heroic-couplet poetry concludes the poem. Beginning simply, invoking the simplicity of the shepherds, the poetry rises steadily and deftly in fervor and tempo:

To you a Child is born, to you a Son is given.
  Such joy, as ends the harvests happy toyle,
Such joy, as when the Victors, part the spoyl,
Upon your ransom'd heads, shall ever smile.
  When to full Stature, and perfection grown
Possess'd of holy Davids sacred Throne,
He shall, th' Immortal and tryumphant Boy,
Th' Infernal Powers, and all their rule destroy,
The cursed Serpent's head, his weight shall feel,
And threaten'd vengance, for his brused heel.
The flaming Cherub, shall his guard remitt,
And Paradice, again be open sett.
Angels and God, shall dwell with men below.
And men releas'd, to God, and Angels go.
Peace, to the troubl'd World he shall restore,
And bloody discord, shall prevail no more,
The Lamb, his side by the tam'd Wolff shall lay,
And o're the Aspicks den, the child shall play.
Contending Elements, his Pow'r shall own,
The Winds, shall att his word their rage lay down,
And the chas't billows, shall forbear to frown.

(218–19)

The mingling of biblical images with Miltonic and other late-seventeenth-century imagery carries the narrative and its historical significance.

Like Milton, Herbert, Traherne, Vaughan, and Marvell, Finch makes the pastoral world "not a fiction or a metaphoric locality for the artist's own magic but an example of divine creativity standing apart from the social order."[117] When Damon reaches the point of the Wise Men arriving from the East, he interrupts

himself: "But see! whilst in these pleasing paths I stray, / Night, has resign'd her rule to rising day" (220). This moment is, therefore, rendered both in pastoral time and in allegorical time. Morning has come to the shepherds, and the symbolic dawn, understanding and salvation, has come to humankind. Finch has yet one more arabesque to perform. As she does in other pastorals, she makes the poem unmistakably about writing and the power of poetry both to represent and to carry its auditors out of themselves. Many of the speeches had concluded with the same musical line: "The Season sha'nt be cold, nor shall the Night be long." In fact, she turns the poem into a contest, which so many pastorals were. Menalcus concludes the poem, "Oh! happy shepheard, favour'd with that sight, / That can when but repeated, thus delight" (220). None of the usual prizes for poetry are good enough — "Not flow'ry Garlands. . . ." Rather he awards Damon a bowl: "Joseph's 'twas, by which he did devine; / Upon the sides, is carv'd in works of gold / The mystick sense, of what thou doest unfold" (220). Her poem, then, invokes music as well as the decorative arts, deploying the sister arts to tell the shepherds' story, the Christmas story, and the story of humankind's salvation. The major elements of the pastoral that allow intellectual exploration of issues and ideas, such as the contest and the poet's relationship to the social order, are all present.

Many of the stories adapted into pastoral poetry show considerable dramatic imagination and how flexible the form could be. As the opening of Finch's *Menalcus and Damon* suggests, among the favorite subjects are Old Testament stories, and they are often treated with great freedom. In *The Poor Man's Lamb*, for instance, Finch creates the voice of the prophet Nathan, casts him as the figure of a national bard, and produces moving scenes and considerable prophetic elevation. Her considerable metrical virtuosity is evident in these poems, as *Menalcus and Damon* is in heroic couplets and *The Poor Man's Lamb* is composed of quintains, rhyming *aabba*, the first two lines of eight syllables, the next two of four syllables, and the last line of six syllables.

Devout Soliloquies

Rowe arranged to have her *Devout Exercises of the Heart in Meditation and Soliloquy, Prayer and Praise* sent to Isaac Watts to edit and publish, and her other poetic works, including the devout soliloquies, were published by Henry Grove and her brother-in-law Theophilus Rowe. Rowe's letter to Watts and some of his prefatory observations explain the peculiar private-public space that much religious writing of the period occupied. Rowe wrote,

> The Reflections were occasionally written, and only for my own Improvement; but I am not without Hopes that they may have the same Effect on some pious Minds, as the reading the Experiences of others have had on my own Soul. The experimental Part of Religion has generally a greater Influence than its Theory.[118]

Watts goes on to describe how the rapturous language distressed him so much that he "moderated" it, but when he read them as "devout exercises," then a respected prose category of practical divinity, thereby attempting to enter "into the Spirit" of them, he felt humbled by how far below her spiritual "attainments" he was.[119] This peculiar tone of embarrassment, apology, special pleading, and somewhat grudging admiration for such faith remains characteristic today. Rowe's most recent biographer and editor, for instance, uses terms such as the following to describe her work: "Here we find rather wild indulgence in divine love."[120]

Watts mentions that there was a time when it was "the Fashion" to write in the language of the Song of Songs, as Rowe had with her canticles. He believes this day has past, and although he does not seem to recognize it, Rowe has left the voice of her canticles and created a new category of devout exercises, if not a new poetic genre, as Madeleine Marshall claims for her.[121] Preachers like Watts wrote hymns out of deep religious feeling, but they were also concerned with extending the preaching and teaching of their sermons and increasingly with harmonizing hymns with moments in the liturgy of their services. Women circulated religious poetry among their friends as devout exercises and expressions of shared personal feelings even as they sometimes wrote poetry suitable for congregational singing, either as a poetic exercise or because they had a real church receptive to their hymns, as Mary Darwall did. Both Grove and Rowe and Watts mention the enjoyment and benefit Rowe's friends received from her religious writings circulated in manuscript.

Each soliloquy is spoken to God, but they are soliloquies because she is on the stage of the world, driven to speak her feelings, and even though she believes she is heard, her experience is of solitariness. Soliloquy VI begins, "O speak!" and concludes with a verse beginning, "When wilt thou speak, and tell me thou art mine? / O how I long to hear that word divine! / When that transporting sound shall bless my ear." Somewhere between direct address and isolated, personal thought, her soliloquies draw upon the dramatic convention used to reveal thought and feeling in an original way that captures, perhaps, the essence of the kind of communication prayer is. In blank verse Soliloquy VI, she writes,

> These eyes have never seen thy lovely face,
> No accent of thy voice has reach'd my ear,
> And yet my heart's acquainted well with thee;
> To thee it opens all its secret store
> Of joy and grief, and whispers ev'ry care.
> (*Misc. Works*, 1:198)

The address to God and her consciousness of her state of mind are inseparable, and she pushes the soliloquy form to express the deepest personal thoughts and feelings of an individual, as soliloquies traditionally do, and to dramatize the complete, open honesty and communion with God that actualizes an ideal image of prayer.

In these sixty-four poems Rowe shows an astonishing range and control of emotion, from gentle pastoral to ecstatic sublime.[122] In a single soliloquy (blank verse VIII) she can write such contrasting passages as,

> thou has crown'd my years
> With smiling plenty, and unmingled peace.

and

> Fountain of love, in thy delightful streams
> Let me for ever bathe my ravish'd soul,
> Inebriated in the vast abyss.

These soliloquies, like many others of her poems, sexualize and even mysticize common religious thoughts and poetic genres. Rowe, like the other poets of the first third of the century, adapts respected forms but wrenches them into new uses and mobilizes them to create her individual, distinctive voice and to mediate religion through them. By doing so, she expresses her identity and subjectivity but also breaks down boundaries between this world and the next, exactly what she wanted to do in the soliloquies.

Rowe employs the various poetic voices in which she has written in wholly original ways. Soliloquy IV, one of the shortest, is a virtuoso example:

> Too low my artless verse, too flat my lays,
> To reach thy glory, and express thy praise;
> Yet let me on my humble reed complain,
> And mourn thy absence in a pensive strain;
> My own soft cares permit me to rehearse,

And with thy name adorn my humble verse.
The streams shall learn it, and the gentle breeze
On its glad wings shall waft it thro' the trees.
The list'ning nymphs, instructed by my flame,
Shall teach their hearts to make a nobler claim;
The swains no more for mortal charms shall pine,
But to celestial worth their vows resign.
The fields and woods the chaste retreats shall prove
Of sacred joys, and pure, immortal love;
And angels leave their high abodes again,
To grace the rural seats, and talk with men.
(Marshall, 258)

Not one of the best of the devout soliloquies, it nevertheless has a sureness of line and conception that attests to her poetic mastery. Beginning in the poet's voice, then sliding smoothly into the pastoral mode, the poem moves through the kinds of love that she set up in *Platonick Love*. Because pastoral love is human but colored by idealizing, she can treat it economically, almost elliptically, and have the swains learn the pure, sacred love of God and angels. Soliloquy III is in the dignified, majestic voice of her paraphrases of the Psalms. Blank verse Soliloquy X paraphrases favorite biblical lines and illustrates the power she can unleash:

My great Redeemer lives! I know he lives!
I feel the sacred, the transporting truth
Exulting in my soul: He lives to plead
My cause above (unworthy as I am!)
He there appears to intercede for me.
(*Misc. Works*, 1:202)

Rowe also employs a number of different forms. For example, Soliloquies VII, IX, and XII are Shakespearian sonnets. The final couplets summarize the ideas that the quatrains have described with concrete imagery that tends to alternate between allusions to the scriptures and her own original imagining; thus, the sonnets move to the abstract of spiritual thought. Soliloquy VII, for instance, helps the reader recall both the parting of the Red Sea and Jesus's walking across the stormy water and then moves to an imagined possibility of her own:

If thou but speak, the raging winds obey,
The waves divide, and leave an open way;

> Thy potent breath dissolves the rock, and brings
> From solid marble, softly-bubbling springs.
> (*Misc. Works*, 1:181)

The sonnet concludes with the theoretical level: "Thy wide commands no limits can confine, / Whate'er omnipotence can do is thine." The language of these poems is permeated with biblical diction, and Rowe's voice and that of the scriptures are completely mingled, as they are in the opening of blank verse Soliloquy XVIII, which echoes the book of Ruth: "I will not leave thee; bid me not be gone, / Repulse me not, for I will take no nay. / As thou dost live, I will pursue thee still."

In blank verse Soliloquy XIII she writes, "Thou art my first desire, my warmest wish: / These restless motions, these repeated sighs / Are all addresst to thee." In a variety of fervent poems, she expresses the desire to see the face of God. The carefully crafted soliloquies are filled with lines like these from blank verse Soliloquy IX: "O Blow these clouds away, and let me see / Those distant glories that attract my love!" To the modern reader, her poems are unsettling in their desire for death, a theme characteristic of Renaissance verse. In Soliloquy XV she begins, "Come, gentle death, release my struggling soul / From those dull fetters which her flight controul!" The desire is unremitting; in blank verse Soliloquy XLI she pleads, "Ye lagging months and years, take swifter wings, / And bring the promis'd day. . . ." Both the necessary passage to seeing the face of God and her contemporaries' familiar springboard to meditation, death was a conventional subject *and* trope for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poets.

The *Devout Exercises* and the devout soliloquies incorporate personal experiences and interpretations into the set pieces of meditation (the goodness of God, hope of pardon, surrender to God). Helen Wilcox has expressed surprise at the "strong sense of women devotional poets participating within communities, whether linked by doctrinal, intellectual, or social interests."[123] Rowe gave copies of these texts to friends as she wrote them—Watts speaks of her having written the devout exercises over many years, and she was sure of the community of friends and believers who shared her religious longings and even her language and metaphors. That and her own religion surely give the unmistakable tone of self-confidence and certainty in the soliloquies. In blank verse Soliloquy XIX she writes, "Thou taught'st my infant lips thy name, / And didst my first desires inflame." Many of the sonnets communicate a straining to know more, to *see* God. The soliloquy form works so well because, just as speakers of dramatic

soliloquies cannot satisfactorily reach those about whom they speak, Rowe cannot see, adequately know, the God to whom she speaks. Blank verse Soliloquy XXVII is a deeply personal poem. It opens reflectively, "How slowly moves the sun." She calls herself "a sojourner" and "stranger" and gives full expression to the idea that this earth is not her home, not even "the wilderness of this world" so common in Nonconformist texts: "What have I here to hold my soul from thee?" "Wand'ring thro' darksome ways and gloomy wilds" (Marshall, 272–74).

It is possible that these religious poems, and similar ones by men, are of major significance to the history of poetry in English. The excitement that poets of the period felt about the expansion of kinds of religious poetry may never be recoverable, but recalling Watts's title *The Adventurous Muse* reminds us that the greatest poets of the age found it a place for rich experimentation. The shorter poems are the most important and most varied lyrics of the century. The writing of religious poetry grew in popularity throughout the century. In addition to the continued religious seriousness of the period, the Evangelical movement encouraged new poets writing in new forms. Rowe's poetry was perhaps the most easily accessible of all the poetry written by women because of its publication history. Her confidence, her technical variety, and her willingness to adapt and break dramatically with conventions, as well as her known virtue and dedication to writing, made her a powerfully enabling model. She was obviously willing to write poetry that gave her great pleasure, exercised her intellectual faculties, and expressed her deepest personal feelings, as well as poetry that was useful to her fellow men and women. Although she left a number of excellent secular poems, it was to religious poetry that she contributed most, and this major strain of eighteenth-century poetry was significantly enriched and influenced by her work. In many ways a transitional figure between the seventeenth century and the post-Augustan period, like Finch, she freely blended conventions and created new technical strategies and forms.

Unlike today, in her time Rowe was not considered an isolated freak, but her example probably did encourage women to write religious poetry, for she showed its potential as a place for them to express public as well as private concerns. Elizabeth Hands, for instance, includes three soliloquies in *The Death of Amnon*, and some of the hymns in the influential *Collection of Hymns and Psalms for Public and Private Worship* (1795) written by Mary Masters, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and other women carry traces of Rowe's hymns.[124] Shortly before Rowe's death, which coincided with England's Evangelical revival, there were new signs of widespread enjoyment of religious poetry. For example, in 1733 Edward Cave

began sponsoring a series of competitions in his *Gentleman's Magazine* that fueled yet more writing of religious verse. The first had as its subject Queen Caroline's grotto, but after complaints about "scurrilities" the rest were on religious topics such as "On the Divine Attributes" and "On Life, Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell" or topics open to heavy religious moralizing, such as "On Astronomy."[125] Jane Brereton was one of the poets who sent in poems and, after that, continued to submit poetry under the pseudonym Melissa. In fact, her poem *On Life, Death . . .* opens her *Poems on Several Occasions.*[126]

CHAPTER FIVE

Friendship Poems

> And friendship, better than a Muse inspires.
> — ANNA LAETITIA BARBAULD

The subject of this chapter is the only significant form of poetry that eighteenth-century women inherited from women: the friendship poem. Rather than a static, antiquarian curiosity, it became a major, flexible kind—a world of originality, personal expression, and exploration. Friendship poems reveal women's longings for beautiful poetry, for the opportunity to characterize experiences, and for participation in the century's public-sphere debates. As Louise Bernikow has said, women's poems are "texts for the study of consciousness,"[1] and the friendship poem is the unique poetic kind in which women do not have to appropriate or accommodate to a space already claimed by men. They are places to contest or ignore the definitions of and expectations for themselves. They are set in shady groves, by firesides, on banks of streams, and in busy, often raucous kitchens. Sometimes the poets used their own and their friends' names, and sometimes they gave themselves and one another names that had never belonged to a father or husband—"not their 'real' names, but genuinely their own."[2] The friendship poem provided a supremely adaptable position from which women could speak, and they did.

Some of these poems imagine a place outside the male gaze, and others record

the permeation of the patriarchy into every aspect of their lives. Most express at least some values at odds with the dominant culture's, but the fact that almost none approaches the virulent portrait of the patriarchy and the world (and the God) it has created found in women's biblical narratives argues that the friendship poem is part of a safer, woman-centered space. Authority and the authoritative voice are not issues, for the poems tend to be occasional, vernacular, and unpretentious and about things the woman knows. Significantly, women's—not just the poet's—creative identity is taken for granted and openly acknowledged. Both Jane Brereton and Mrs. Owen, one the poet and the other the maker of a suit, are artists in *On seeing Mrs. Eliz. Owen . . . in an embroider'd Suit, all her own Work*, and their creations are texts that reveal their talent and their "souls," their essential selves.

The most revolutionary aspect of the friendship poem is the completeness with which the poets weave the poems into women's lives. The poems are requested and written on every occasion, they comment on every subject, and they are increasingly a part of women's lifestyles. Isobel Grundy has discovered a manuscript of poems from the 1730s kept by a group of adolescents, "high-spirited future wives and mothers," and uses it to illustrate why they "found in poetry both an agenda and a voice for their rebellion."[3] Given their class, the society in which they lived, and the by then well-developed uses of friendship poems, this conclusion should be no surprise. Grundy continues, "At a moment when conduct-book culture was gathering power, these young women deployed their own literary resources for mental independence and imaginative self-realization."[4] This statement could be applied to friendship poems in general, and the self-consciousness of the practitioners of the form continued to grow. In no other poetry do we find so many playful representations of writing. Thus, these poems richly contributed to the creation of the space made for the poet who happened to be a woman.

In this chapter I introduce some of the major themes and kinds of friendship poems by locating Katherine Philips's influence in several enduring themes in friendship poems, including those that retain the image of the special harmony between the souls of ideal friends, those that present friendship as a serious rival to marriage, and those that are poems of separation. In the second section I look at the poems set in what Simone de Beauvoir called women's counteruniverse. It sifts the friendship poem as a source of new evidence about early modern women's lives and opinions, something feminists continue to seek,[5] and argues their significance in empowering women and encouraging them to write and

publish. As the examples of Jane Brereton's poems in these sections demonstrate, she found the form especially compatible. The most important friendship poet after Philips, she exemplifies the flexibility of the form, and the third section is a brief examination of some of her most unusual poems of this kind. The final section demonstrates that the confident stance as an intelligent woman in friendship poems leads naturally into poems that take a stand on public debates about value systems. The flexibility of the now-mature form is evident in its vigorous employment in taking ideological positions. From the many possible ideological controversies, I have selected a few contributions about the gentility movement and such social temptations as class climbing, shopping, and luxury. Although friendship poems had always included comments about public sphere and political events, the self-confident women of the last generation of poets in the century adapted the form to make strong, public judgments. Among the poets whose work anchors this chapter are Anne Finch, Elizabeth Carter, Mary Masters, Mary Jones, and, of course, Jane Brereton.

The Legacy of Katherine Philips

When Katherine Philips wrote her friendship poems, often under the Platonic name Orinda, she was contesting the tradition extending from classical times through the Renaissance that assumed that friendship between men was more serious, more philosophical, and more pure than any other relationship, including love between brothers and between husband and wife, and that women, because of their intellectual deficiencies and emotional nature, were incapable of it. It was superior, and it proved the superiority of men. As an ideal it had existed before Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* popularized the idea that "friends have one Soul between them" and a friend is "another self."[6] People recognized its importance in the public sphere, and at the end of the eighteenth century the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant and the rising French philosopher Benjamin Constant would debate the degree of allegiance owed a friend. The debate was a recognition that friendship was not only private but played a critical role in "the founding of society, the legal order, and the sphere of political action—or reaction."[7] Laurie Shannon argues in *Sovereign Amity* that this conception of friendship "enfranchises" the private subject and provides "an explicit mode of self-construction that proves enabling to a detailed scheme of sovereignty for the self"[8]—deeply suggestive terms for the consideration of women's friendship poems.

In Philips's time, Queen Henrietta Maria and her cult of *précieuse* had created a concept of platonic relationships between men and women that were images, but not full realizations, of such male friendships.[9] Her group was deeply political, almost a rival court, and, among other things, brought off performances of plays that subjected foreign dignitaries to allegorical advice. From the beginning, then, these relationships and the art they produced were tinted by political alliances, counteragendas, and an ideal of equality of the sexes. This love was pure and intellectual, a harmony of souls that assured perfect confidence, communication, and understanding. Philips defines it in *A Friend:*

> The chiefest thing in Friends is Sympathy:
> There is a Secret that doth Friendship guide,
> Which makes two Souls before they know agree,
> Who by a thousand mixtures are ally'd,
> And chang'd and lost, so that it is not known
> Within which breast doth now reside their own.[10]

This "sympathy" was part of the theory of the harmony of the spheres, whose movement is the result of heavenly harmony. Perfect friends were like the same string on two different instruments, perfectly tuned, vibrating in absolute harmony. Because such love was inseparable from the music of the spheres, it was therefore mystical. Elizabeth Carter, in a poem "occasioned by an Ode written by Mrs. Philips," summarizes,

> Friendship her soft harmonious Touch affords,
> And gently strikes the sympathetic Chords,
> Th' agreeing Notes in social Measures roll,
> And the sweet Concert flows from Soul to Soul.[11]

Such love had come to blend classical, Renaissance, and biblical conceptions of love, and Philips would write in *A Friend*,

> Love, Nature's Plot, this great Creation's Soul,
> The Being and the Harmony of things,
> . . . . . .
> Friendship's an Abstract of this noble Flame,
> 'Tis Love refin'd and purg'd from all its dross,
> The next to Angels Love, if not the same,
> As strong as passion is, though not so gross:

It antedates a glad Eternity,
And is an Heaven in Epitome.

(Philips, 94)

In this same poem Philips argues for women's capacity for such friendships and dismisses those who deny it as prejudiced:

If Souls no Sexes have, for Men t' exclude
  Women from Friendship's vast capacity,
Is a Design injurious or rude,
  Onely maintain'd by partial tyranny.

(95)

The daughter of a Nonconformist merchant, Philips entered court circles, where the *précieuse* influence was still strong, through a visit to Dublin in 1662. She was accompanying her newly married friend Anne Owen, "Lucasia," and became part of the circle of Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery. Boyle, the Earl of Roscommon, and the Duke of Ormonde, all poets and patrons of the arts, were her friends. When she died young, she became the "matchless" Orinda, and poems by the greatest poets and literati of the time praised her. Abraham Cowley wrote that "if Apollo should design / A Woman Laureat to make, / Without dispute he would Orinda take, / Though Sappho and the famous Nine / Stood by."[12] The Matchless Orinda quickly came to be rather different from the woman who lived a vigorous, rather ambitious life and who may have been the first woman to have a play produced on the British stage. By 1696 she was firmly established as what men wanted in a woman writer, and rearrangements of her poetry obscured the threatening power of her friendship poems.[13] Her virtue and alleged modesty were as celebrated as her poetry.[14] Thus, she became an enabling figure for women, one who contrasted markedly with Aphra Behn.

By 1712 men were beginning to ridicule Philips's poetry. William Newcomb, for instance, in *Bibliotecha: A Poem Occasioned by the Sight of a Modern Library* wrote that "Softness her Want of Sense supplies" and "Her number glide but wondros low, / Instead of rapture give us Sleep, / And striving to be humble creep."[15] This is not quite fair to Philips, but it does suggest the changing taste in poetry and the superficial, dismissive way in which men were already regarding her work. When we turn to the poetry that women might have read in earlier editions or bought in the 1710 reprint of her work, we find a variety of poetic kinds (verse essays, elegies, encomia, translations, political and religious poetry) and seventy-one

Platonic and non-Platonic friendship poems that are richly varied in content and style.[16] Among them are poems in dactylic triplets and anapestic, dactylic, and heroic couplets. Major subjects for Philips that later women would continue were definitions of friendships described in a variety of tones (sentimental, witty, analytical, angry), marriage (what it was and might be), and separation (the reasons for it and the deprivations). Philips wrote an invitation-to-visit poem, a few occasional poems, and two or three on writing, all types that later women would embrace and develop. These poems lay a firm foundation for the work of eighteenth-century women poets, and the more they are read with the later women's poems, the more the legacy Philips left becomes apparent.

One of Philips's most beautiful and transitional poems is the much-admired *A Retir'd Friendship, To Ardelia*. It begins, "Come, my *Ardelia*, to this Bower, / Where kindly mingling Souls awhile" (28). These lines are echoed over and over and begin a strain of poems that associate friendship, retirement, and complete contentment. Elizabeth Carter's "Come dear *Emilia*, and enjoy / Reflexion's fav'rite Hour" in *To* —— is but one familiar example. Some time before 1694 Anne Finch began signing some of her poems "Ardelia," perhaps styling herself the retired friend of Philips, whose poetry she knew well and admired.[17] Surely this poem appealed to her because of lines that expressed her own life experience:

> Here is no quarrelling for Crowns,
> Nor fear of changes in our Fate;
> No trembling at the great ones frowns,
> Nor any slavery of State.
> . . . . . .
> From Bloud and Plots this Place is free,
> And calm as are those looks of thine.
> (Philips, 28)

Many of Philips's poems repeat these themes and ideas that were of great importance to Finch. Both women write about the effects of political change on private lives and the self-discipline that allows happiness or, at least, tranquillity of mind to come from within. This kind of friendship poem survives throughout the century, as it does in Susanna Blamire's reworking of it in *The Nun's Return to the World*, the narrative of a nun ordered back into the world by the National Assembly of France.[18] Like so many of the metrical tales popular in Blamire's time, this one is a conglomerate of poetic genres, in this case a virtuoso performance of her poetic range. As the nun prepares to leave, she remembers her past dwellings, first the rural cottage and "happy father at his homely board," the simple, domes-

tic life she really wanted, and then the fashionable life, "No more I know to form the quick reply." Each subject is treated with the diction and rhythm used in her century for poems with these differing subjects. Then *The Nun's Return* becomes a friendship-separation poem as the narrative concludes and the nun thinks about the friend she is leaving: "In leaving her, I leave my better part, / With half the fairest virtues of my heart."[19]

Perhaps surprisingly, these apparently largely private friendship poems contain a significant amount of comment on political events and the impact of the public on the lives of individuals. Philips's and Finch's nostalgia and mourning for Stuart kings unite public and private themes, but, typically, a sovereign self emerges and provides overarching perspective.[20] In *In Memory of Mrs. E.H.* Philips writes,

> That frame of Soul which is content alone,
> And needs no Entertainment but its own.
> Thy even Mind, which made thee good and great,
> Was to thee both a shelter and retreat.
>
> (Philips, 105)

In a better poem than Philips's, Finch describes "Ardelia" as "Blasted by a Storm of Fate, / Felt thro' all the *British* State; / Fall'n, neglected, lost, forgot." *The Petition for an Absolute Retreat*, a poem inscribed to her friend Catherine Tufton, Countess of Thanet, includes Finch's definition of friendship and concludes with her description of contentment, "a rightly govern'd Frame":

> Let me then, indulgent Fate!
> Let me still, in my Retreat,
> From all roving Thoughts be freed,
> Or Aims, that may Contention breed:
> Nor be my Endeavours led
> By Goods, that perish with the Dead!
>
> (Reynolds, 76)

Her poem conveys a stronger sense of normal, happy relationships both with "A *Partner* suited to my Mind" and with Arminda (Tufton): "Give then, O Indulgent Fate! / Give a Friend in that Retreat" (74).

Rather than the absolute unity of personhood in Philips's poems, Arminda gives bracing advice and a broader perspective, as well as sympathy. These women make each other better and also entertain each other with "wit" and good conversation, a combination found throughout Finch's poems. For example, in

To the Painter . . . of Cleone Finch mentions the "sympathizing Joy" she and Grace Thynne share.[21] There is none of the Platonic distancing in spite of the pastoral names in *Absolute Retreat;* Finch's poem is firmly set in a personal, Christian world. Its opening stanzas contrast the world of courts, wars, greed, and ambition to that of the Bible, evoked by lovely scriptural imagery. The third verse, for instance, begins by echoing the Twenty-third Psalm:

> Courteous Fate! afford me there
> A *Table* spread without my Care,
> With what the neighb'ring Fields impart, . . .
> (Reynolds, 69)

It creates an Eden with grapes, figs, cherries, peaches, and strawberries, "All within my easie Reach." In contrast are exotic delicacies, truffles, morillia (made from morillon grapes), and ortolan (a small, tasty bird), and aromas concocted by "the chemist." Finch creates a sense of the wholeness of life that slides easily into "When all Heaven shall be survey'd." She also ranges through history, drawing upon both the Bible and, especially, Plutarch's *Lives* to give a timeless wholeness to human experience and her vision of wisdom.

Women continued to find Platonic expressions of unity useful, even as they subordinated them to more modern representations of ideal friendship. As late as 1750 Mary Jones wrote in *On her [Lady Henry Beauclerk's] attending Miss Charlot Clayton in the Small-Pox:* ". . . gentle deeds, and corresponding Love / Impell'd the sympathetic strings to move / To Nature's harmony; while artless lays, / To HER and LOVELACE tun'd."[22] The sheer joy of Mary Masters's *My Love describ'd to CAMILLA* is communicated by the verse form and sustained by brief allusions to the Renaissance idea of sympathetic souls. It begins,

> My Love is of celestial Birth,
> A bright Angelic Flame,
> That makes a Paradise on Earth,
> And FRIENDSHIP is its Name.

Later verses repeat the concept and quietly defend women's friendships:

> FRIENDSHIP on VIRTUE's Basis fix'd,
> Can countless Pleasures give;
> When social Souls are kindly mix'd,
> And in each other live.

. . . . . .
Nor Force nor Interest can compel
  This heav'nly Bliss below;
Resembling Minds alone can tell
  From whence such Pleasures flow.[23]

This final verse gently alludes to the superiority and purity of the friendship of "resembling minds" and is carefully presented as without gender. Some lines in the poem seem to be more descriptive of women's lives than of men's, and the setting is private and intimate, more typical of eighteenth-century women's existences than men's. The overall effect is to persuade that women's friendships can be equal to the masculine ideal. Jones too defends women's friendships and argues the superiority of the women who live out the ideal. "How few for Friendship Nature has design'd!" she exclaims in the smallpox poem.[24]

Elizabeth Carter in *To [Miss Lynch] (While thus my Thoughts)* wrote, "Dear Object of a Love whose fond Excess / No studied Forms of Language can express." In this harmonious poem she describes seeking solace in solitude, then in crowds, and finally in philosophy, but her heart always "Steals from the Circle to converse with thee." Carter thought of herself as a philosopher, and this poem takes a distinctly original, signature turn with an allusion to Plato:

With *Plato* soar on Contemplation's Wing,
And trace Perfection to th' eternal Spring:
. . . . . .
Whence Order, Elegance, and Beauty move
Each finer Sense, that tunes the Mind to Love;
Whence all that Harmony, and Fire, that join,
To form a Temper, and a Soul like thine.
Thus thro' each diff'rent Track my Thoughts pursue,
Thy lov'd Idea ever meets my View,
Of ev'ry Joy, of ev'ry Wish a Part,
And rules each varying Motion of my Heart.[25]

Her friend Cynthia becomes the Platonic Ideal, the personification of the ideal person and friend. In this poem and others Carter was deliberately working within Philips's legacy. *To [Miss Lynch]* is followed by *To the Same. Occasioned by an Ode written by Mrs. Philips*, in which Carter compliments Philips for "spotless Verse with genuine Force exprest / The brightest Passion of the human Breast."[26]

As late as 1777 Mary Savage was still writing within this kind of Philips poem with lines like these: ". . . kind Heaven, / In pity grant, that kindred souls unite," and she was still refuting the doubts about women's friendships: ". . . yet some there are who think, / No female form was e'er endow'd with pow'rs / To give or to receive this vital spark."[27]

None of Philips's poems has been as controversial as her poems of separation, and no type of friendship poem resonated so deeply with women. In the angry, betrayed poems that Philips wrote about Mary Aubrey (Rosania) and especially about the second marriage of Anne Owen (Lucasia) she unleashes an energy and passion that unsettles readers, but these poems have held the most interest for recent critics. Elizabeth Wahl has sensed that Edmund Gosse believed Philips to be "the 'predatory' lesbian," and Celia Easton maintains that Philips wrote "conquest poems."[28] Certainly she raises the question to whom final allegiance is due, a question to which men had traditionally answered, "Not wife but friend." Whether intended or not, the friendship poem poses a foil for marriage and in gaps and silences admits friendship as rival and women answering, "Friend, not husband." Eliza Tuite writes in *To a Friend. Written, 1782*, "Let Friendship then be hence my only theme, / For Hope is vain, and Love's an idle dream" (Fullard, 84). Frances Brooke's *Ode to Friendship* is a pledge to "rejoice" with friendship and turn away from love's "galling chains." When women speak of marriage and husbands, they write about duty;[29] when of friendship and friends, of love. Just as foils function in plays, the stronger the contrasts, the more brilliantly specific practices and possibilities in each were forced into communal awareness. Going beyond the dialogue poems that debated love versus friendship, these poems are about marriage, not love, and often suggest that it is often disappointing and even isolating. While the dialogue poems often freeze the speakers in youth, these poems create images of the future and raise the possibility of a happy life without marriage. Women's friendships were depicted as voluntary, egalitarian relationships based upon mutual interests, satisfaction, and tenderness. Even as the comparisons and contrasts to marriage give friendships legitimacy and status, they also highlight marriage's dissatisfactions.

As numerous social historians and feminist critics have demonstrated, resistance to women's friendships and a sense that they threatened marriage and even social order grew in the century. How pervasive prejudice against women was can be surmised from the unbroken line of poems about husbands restricting their wives' friendships with women. The nature of woman continued to be an issue, and satirists and even moralists continued to doubt the sex's capacity for

sincerity and constancy.[30] The poet and letter writer Henrietta Knight (later Lady Luxborough) was legally confined to the country and forbidden to come within twenty miles of the Bath road, where her close friend Lady Hertford lived.[31] Janet Todd uses two quotations as epigraphs for *Women's Friendship in Literature* that assert many husbands' attitudes. One is the famous speech by Mirabell from *The Way of the World* (1700), "I covenant that . . . you admit no sworn confidante or intimate of your own sex," and the other the words of the tyrannical husband Mr. Morgan in *Millenium Hall* (1762): "My wife must have no other companion or friend but her husband . . . intimates I forbid; I shall not choose to have my faults discussed between you and your friend."[32] Elizabeth Griffith wrote, "Few are the pleasures we possess . . . / From female friendship now restrain'd, / What can they more to vex?"[33] At about the same time, Mary Whateley (Darwall) invokes the authority of Shakespeare, now recognized as the national playwright and an arbiter of passions, to help her hold her own against the attacks on women's friendships. In *Epistle to a Friend* she uses the story of Celia giving up everything to go with Rosalind:

> And well has Shakespeare (ever honour'd name)
> To female friendship giv'n immortal fame.
> So dear was Rosalind to Celia's Breast,
> When, by her father's tyrant power oppress'd.

In *As You Like It* Celia defines friendship in the classical manner as ". . . the love / That teaches thee that thou and I *am* one" (1.3.92–93). As the anonymous author of *The Correspondents, An Original Novel in a Series of Letters* (1775) says, in Celia Shakespeare had "delineated to perfection the character of a *female friend.*" The female letter writer continues, "Let us do justice to my favourite heroine: while David and Jonathan, Pylades and Orestes, . . . are so triumphantly held up on your side, let us at least erect one standard of friendship on our own, and inscribe it with the names of Celia and Rosalind."[34] In *On Friendship* Mary Masters writes that "Friendship is *Love* from all its Dross refin'd."[35]

Rather than decreasing the threat to marriage, the fact that so many of the poets from Philips through Barbauld were married increased the possibility of telling comparisons and critiques. In other words, these poets had had it both ways and could create subversive and threatening analogies and contrasting scenarios. For instance, the conservative Jane West, who was married to a Northamptonshire farmer and had three sons, recalled in *Letters to a Young Lady* the time when she belonged "to the beloved circle of which [Anne Maunsell] was one

of the brightest ornaments. The lively sally, the literary discussion, the perspicuous remark." These are the pleasures that most of the poetic women describe in the company of their special women friends. West wrote, "Many (may I not say most?) of our sex, from their cradle to grave, scarcely know the exercise of free will, either in the disposal of their time or their fortunes, . . . in the selection of friends and acquaintances."[36] In her novel *A Gossip's Story* (1796) the bad example, Marianne, has an intimate girlfriend who makes her husband angry and jealous.[37]

Long before West, women were adapting the traditional contest between love and friendship to contribute their opinions. In *A Pastoral (Phillis and Aminta)* Rowe presents two friends stealing out into the dawn and, "Securely seated near a purling stream," confiding in each other. The security and contentment of the female friendship is contrasted to the uncertainties of their heterosexual loves, relationships in which Aminta practices cruelty, and Phillis compliancy. As they critiqued courtship, women created a discursive space in which a number of assumptions previously exempt from contestation became unstable and subject to debate.[38] In exceptionally varied styles, they move on to give advice to other women on what qualities to seek in a husband. Elizabeth Hands's *Love and Friendship: A Pastoral* appears to be one of the ubiquitous poems that are contests between heterosexual love and women's friendships.[39] As had become common in women's poetry by then, two nymphs, rather than shepherds, compete, and somewhat surprisingly, they are "Alike ambitious to excel in song." The poem ends, however, with the appearance of a third nymph, who proclaims herself the most fortunate because her lover is "At once a friend sincere, and lover kind."[40] This poem and many others echo Philips's analysis in *A Friend:*

> Nobler than Kindred or then Marriage-band,
> Because more free; Wedlock-felicity
> It self doth only by this Union stand,
> And turns to Friendship or to Misery.
> Force or Design Matches to pass may bring,
> But Friendship doth from Love and Honour spring.
> (Philips, 94)

Hands's wry observation on how marriages come about and that the result is about as certain as a coin flip reinforces the best result, that marriage will grow to resemble *women's* friendships. Mary Robinson's *To Aurelia on her Going Abroad* is a typical advice poem that voices the kinds of fears and reservations that writing women in all genres held:

Be cautious, fair Aurelia, how you trust,
To fickle man — for few alas are just.
If at love's altar you resign your heart,
Let well try'd constancy direct the dart.[41]

Quite similar in combining aspiration and anxiety and especially in fearing "mistakes" is a poem by Ann Murry, *To Miss J. West, with a Piece of Bride-Cake:*

Create a Swain sincere and just,
On whom thou may'st with safety trust;
Yet pleasing lively, witty, smart,
A Man, quite after thine own heart.
This World is but a dream throughout,
We wake, and our mistakes find out;
Our hopes high rais'd, and prospects bright,
Vanish like visions from the sight.
May they to thee be verified,
By being soon an happy bride![42]

Complementing women's poems that conceive of their friendship with a woman as the ideal relationship between husband and wife are those that offer an image of the ideal man. Grierson's *Speech of Cupid* has a couplet sketching the ideal: "His Head adorn'd with ev'ry Art; / With ev'ry Grace his glowing Heart" (Tucker, 143). The qualities women praise in men are highly consistent, and the poets are consistent in believing them rare. Many fewer friendship poems congratulate a friend on choosing a kind, exemplary man, as Jane Brereton's *To a Lady. On her Marriage* does. It praises her friend for her choice by calling the man a "humane Philosopher" and a "Man of Truth." She invokes Pope's authority as the final compliment: "An honest Man's the noblest Work of God."[43]

A few of the friendship poems are protest poems, as is Mary Savage's *Letter to Miss E.B. on her Marriage*, which deserves to be known with the best in the genre. First she mocks conduct books, neatly summarizing almost all of the Marquis of Halifax's *Ladies New Year's Gift* and, in a transitional verse asks, "But is it all our debt to pay, / And have we nothing left to say? / Must every she, that's in the state, / Submission find for self and mate?" Her thesis becomes, "the sex's faults are even." As she paints the faults of men, she uses a light touch. She laughs, "Each has a fools cap — and a bell / And what is worse, can't always tell, / While they have got it on their head." She points out that most of the conduct books seem aimed at women and purport to be "wisdom"; in contrast, she says hers is

based on observation and practical advice to both sexes. "Be not this forgot; / That neither sex must think to find, / Perfection in the human kind."[44]

Hundreds of these advice poems survive, and a very large number of them hint at the fact that marriage will separate a woman from almost everyone but her husband and assert the security and longer-lasting pleasures of women's friendships. Whether sentimental, satirical, playful, or elegiac in tone, they capture the century's sense that the institution of marriage was in need of some reform and hold up women's friendships as a devastating foil. Mary Jones's witty *Matrimony* includes the lines, "At length she found the name of *wife* / Was but another word for *strife*."[45] The husband soon makes no effort to hide "Intrigues, diseases, and duns," and reproach and debate replace the wife's "dreams of joy." Many of these poems tout self-discipline as the only certain route to tranquillity. This was, of course, a lesson that eighteenth-century writers preached frequently, and conduct books such as the Marquis of Halifax's and poems by Pope on the subject were much quoted. In the hands of someone like Savage or Jones the patriarchal ideology and possibilities for tyranny are laid bare even as a woman's self-control and hard-won contentment are contrasted to oppressed hopelessness or fruitless rebellion.

It is only the blink of an eye that separates friendship as foil to marriage from the conservatives' image of a threatening lesbian desire.[46] Frances Sheridan's father opposed her learning to write because it would lead to "the multiplication of love letters, or the scarcely less dangerous interchange of sentiment in the confidential effusions of female correspondents."[47] Especially in a patriarchal culture in which inheritance depends in myriad ways on controlling the traffic in women, female same-sex desire elicits powerful suppression. Janet Todd describes Katherine Philips's form of friendship as a "close, effusive tie, revelling in rapture and rhetoric."[48] Rapture, rhetoric, reveling—all are threatening, ungenteel, and unfeminine, and later women poets carefully mask or exclude expressions of them. Philips had crossed the line in fighting to preserve intimate, passionate relationships with married women and in expressing feelings of angry betrayal when she lost the contest. Carter's lifestyle and large body of prose work obscured the similarities between her poems and Philips's on same-sex desire. She moves close to recognizing the modern "love which has no name" in "Dear Object of a Love whose fond Excess / No studied Forms of Language can express."[49] In contrast to Philips, whose poems often speak intensely to another and have no settings, Carter and later women distracted attention away from the pair with descriptions of nature. A poem like Chudleigh's *The Choice* exhibits what Eve

Kosofsky Sedgwick has identified as "transgressive desire . . . articulated so as to foreclose the possibility of its realization."[50] "One Soul, one Thought, one Voice" does not admit the carnal but, ironically, can be seen as more transgressive and threatening in its exclusion of religion. The establishment of what critics call the polite model of friendship, like the true platonic, also rendered sexuality invisible if not impossible. Its emphasis on modesty, virtue, and retirement seemed picturesque rather than protean.

Constantia Grierson's remarkable georgic *To Miss Laetitia Van Lewen at a Country Assize* (1748) couches the competition for a female friend in terms of her friend's pleasure—a definitely subversive move. The competition, although obscured by its light language, is serious. Grierson gives a lively picture of life among rural folk and insists,

> The fleeting birds may soon in ocean swim,
> . . . . . .
> When you can in the lonely forest walk,
> And with some serious matron gravely talk
> Of possets, poultices, and waters 'still'd,
> And monstrous casks with mead and cider fill'd;
> How many hives of bees she has in store,
> And how much fruit her trees this summer bore.
>
> (Fullard, 295)

Although the poet contrasts the men who could really appreciate Van Lewen in town to the rural hunters and attorneys, the real rivalry is between the suitors and "the longing eyes of your CONSTANTIA." There is, then, in the description of the men and their conversation an implied contrast to the conversation with her and within a largely female literary circle in Dublin. As Kate Lilley says, this poem "satirizes georgic topoi as the dull matter proper to the reproduction of femininity."[51] The poem sets the "serious matron" concerned with georgic husbandry against the self-educated, lively, city woman who can write a poem with a learned reference to Tully. Philips's Platonism and the other highly stylized kinds of poetic diction she uses continue to protect her from identification as a lesbian, and poems like Grierson's focus attention on lively, social life, thereby obscuring the intimacy lying just beneath the surface. Because the underlying issue in this poem is marriage, there is both an affective and a political dimension.

The poem of separation and loss inaugurated by Philips in poems such as the moving, elegiac *Orinda to Lucasia parting, October 1661* came to have many later

counterparts. Her lament in a letter aptly summarizes the feelings of the speakers of these poems: "We may generally conclude the Marriage of a Friend to be the Funeral of a Friendship."[52] Like Philips's, some of the most moving and revealing poems of separation are on the marriage of a friend. Jane Brereton's *Verses on the Loss of a Friend* begins as a leisurely retirement poem with a transition couplet, "To crown all this, and make my Joys compleat, / A Friend I had near this belov'd Retreat." Most of the poems on this topic express concern over marriage in general or the particular union, and this one has some of the bluntest lines written:

> Yet soon she mourn'd the fatal Step she made,
> I left to share a Grief I could not aid!
> Grown thus forlorn by her unguarded Choice,
> Her hapless Fortune damp'd my former Joys.[53]

In the same vein, Masters chooses a playful metrical form for her serious message to a friend,

> May you with Freedom still be blest,
> Or of a worthy Heart possest;
> But, Oh, 'tis hard amongst Mankind,
> A Heart of real Worth to find,
> Full of Merit, kind and true,
> Wise and good, and fit for you.[54]

In *To Lady Williams, and Mrs. A. Davies at Llanoorda*, another marriage-separation poem, Brereton writes that "my Lady as yet ha'n't Leave to come hither: / O *Hymen!* O *Hymen!* how strong is thy *Tether*" (41). A sense of dread hovers over many of these poems, a feeling that Elizabeth Carter summarized in a letter to the poet Catherine Talbot: "People when they marry are dead and buried to all former attachments." She goes on to say that she knows she will have to accept "the calamity" when a friend marries and inevitably becomes like a mere "common acquaintance."[55]

The realities of eighteenth-century marriage and the threats to friendship that it represented give immediacy and power to these poems that can never be fully recovered. Using turns of thought common to the Metaphysical poets and the world-weary writers of the Restoration, Finch and Philips evoke the mysteries of friendship even as they probe its miseries; later poets do the same in their times' forms and idioms developed for the same purposes. In one of the poems of separation, *A Dialogue of Absence 'twixt Lucasia and Orinda*, for instance, Philips

writes, "Absence from thee doeth tear my heart; / Which, since with thine it union had, / Each parting splits" (Philips, 25). Finch's range from the clichés of the genre to the truly original. Some of the best are about writing letters or exchanging poetry and are in the Wellesley manuscript poems. *To a Friend in Praise of the Invention of Writing Letters*, an especially well constructed poem, describes letters as "baffling absence" and ends unexpectedly and imaginatively with what she unreservedly describes as a wish, one that has been accomplished in our own information age: "Oh! might I live to see an Art arise / . . . / That the dark Pow'rs of distance cou'd subdue, / And make me *See*, as well as *Talk* to You" (Reynolds, 111). What letters meant to separated friends brought out special creativity, as in one of Masters's poems written within a letter. She tells her friend, "I shall keep your Correspondence as Misers do their Gold," and then extends the comparison of herself and a miser:

> A shining Treasure from the World conceal'd,
> A Treasure only to my self reveal'd:
> Like them, I too shall frequently retire,
> Count my rich Store, and secretly admire;
> They GEORGE's Image in his Coin approve,
> Thy pictur'd Mind I in thy Letters love.[56]

The lovely simplicity of "Thy pictur'd Mind" in the letters is emphasized by the balance of Masters's smooth heroic couplets. The woman's letter provides an emblem as valuable and permanent as that of the monarch on a coin. It is letter writing, Darwall says, that makes women's friendships superior to men's. In an untitled manuscript poem she writes that "females, whether young or aged / . . . / If near, they chat; if absent, write." In contrast, when men are "fifty miles asunder":

> Why days, weeks, months may pass away,
> And not a word have they to say;
> To present objects, present friends,
> Th' unsteady mind alone attends;
> Leaving to female breasts that lasting flame
> Which only can deserve true friendship's name.[57]

In this witty, vernacular poem Darwall contests a number of stereotypes about women, including their alleged lack of constancy. The maturity of a genre can be measured when parodies arise, and among them is Mary Jones's *Epistle from Fern Hill* (1750):

Charlot, who my controller is chief,
And dearly loves a little mischief,
Whene'er I talk of packing up,
To all my measures puts a stop:
And tho' I plunge from bad to worse,
Grown duller than her own dull horse. . . .

Her self-deprecating humor proceeds to a dull evening scene in which Charlot plays with a cat and she reads, sloshily spilling her tea now and then (133–38).

Tellingly, poems about the death of a friend are usually less impassioned than marriage-separation poems. Jane Brereton's *On the Death of Mrs. Mary Bennet* is typical in its quiet, reflective lines:

Methinks, I see her — as she late was seen,
Humble, and free, obliging and serene;
Methinks, I hear Her, and with Joy attend
To the sweet Converse of th' instructive Friend,
. . . . . .
When I forget thy Virtues; may I be,
Forgot by those, who most resemble Thee.
(107)

The beautiful repetition of "Methinks" is as moving as the conventional elegiac *In vain* and focuses on memory and the departed instead of primarily on the poet, as many male elegies do. In contrast, Masters and others struggle to imagine and keep fresh the face of the absent friend. Masters, for instance, writes to Marinda, "Your Form, which still before my Eyes I keep," but ends in frustration, "Lost to your Converse, hidden from your View, / And ev'ry thing but Images of you."[58] Elizabeth Tollet's gentle *Adieu my Friend!* is filled with conventional imagery but rises above the ordinary because of her control of diction, meter, and decorum. She has a verse in which she hopes her poetry "can please thy Ghost," reaffirming the permanent connection between the friends. It concludes:

Blue Violets, and Snow-Drops pale,
In pearly Dew for thee shall mourn:
And humble Lillies of the Vale
Shall cover thy neglected Urn.[59]

This poem praises her friend for taste and says that with her "Truth and Virtue sleep."

Rather than resignation or consolation, many of these poems offer restoration: union with the friend in heaven. Many Old Testament stories end with restoration, as those of Joseph and Job do, and in the eighteenth century resignation was not demanded of mourners. Carter's *To [Miss D'Aeth]* promises, "And all my lov'd *Bethia* loses here, / The blooming Walks of *Eden* shall repair."[60] Chudleigh's *The Choice* is a dialogue poem that brings together varied metaphysical imagery in its conclusion:

> No, thou lov'd Darling of my Heart,
> We'll never, never, never part:
> Those Virtues which our Souls combine,
> Shall ever in our Union shine:
> Together we'll lay down our Clay,
> Together throw the Load away;
> And bright as Fire, and light as Air,
> To the superior World repair;
> . . . . . .
> There, there our Friendship we'll improve,
> Together tast the Sweets of Love;
> Still in each other's Bliss rejoice,
> And prove one Soul, one Thought, one Voice.
> (Ezell, 154–55)

From a quiet beginning it rises to a fervent image that is remarkable because there is absolutely no union with God, only a continuation and deepening of their union with each other. Other poems with heavenly reunions include Chudleigh's *To Clorissa*, Jones's *Verses to the Memory of Miss Clayton*, Carter's *To the Same. April the 9th* (to Narcissa), and Seward's *On Eliza Whateley*. So strong is this sentiment that poets at the end of the century who struggle for trust in reunion have been accused of feeling "entitled" to restoration and lacking religious faith.[61]

Encouragement and the Counteruniverse

As the poems on marriage indicate, the friendship poem quickly became a place in which women could express all manner of opinions, dissatisfactions, and desires. Generation by generation, women's friendships had become more suspect and embattled, however. According to Susan Lanser, it was by "at least the 1740s" that "female friendship had ceased to be the property primarily of female

pens and that keeping female bonds under control had become a hegemonic interest."[62] Thomas Marriott's *Female Conduct: Being an Essay on the Art of Pleasing. To be practised by the Fair Sex, Before, and After Marriage* (1759) was all too typical in its admonitions to women to comply. Rousseau's *Émile* was published in 1762. These texts and others like them recall the vituperative, almost hysterical rhetoric aimed at Sarah Churchill and Abigail Masham, Queen Anne's confidantes, and flow easily into the pernicious accusations that Marie Antoinette was "the Head of a Set of Monsters called by each other *Sapphists.*"[63] Janet Todd has argued that Anna Howe in Richardson's *Clarissa* reinforced the fear of female friendship.[64] Anna's deep distrust of men and her hostility to marriage are replicated in many characters in novels written after 1760, who, if they are not disciplined into marriage as Anna is, are presented as damaged and freakish, as the women in *Millenium Hall* are.

By midcentury, women poets were largely joining their sister novelists in retreating from the assertiveness of obvious participation in public controversies about the nature and capacities of women. Rather than insisting upon women's equality or even superiority in friendship, for instance, they portrayed for one another their separate sphere. The friendship poem offered a safe space, for it was a form that critics and moralists largely ignored. Who would bother to censor beyond trivializing poems written in a feminine, reputedly obsolete or even unrecognized form? Michael McKeon has gone so far as to argue that modern patriarchy is based upon the emergence and triumph of a heterosexual order,[65] and this movement can be traced in conceptions, language, and imagery that disappear from friendship poems. Some friendship poems moved into a counteruniverse where women could be unapologetic about themselves as women and could freely explore their situations and roles as women.[66]

Feminist critics have been concerned with the construction of subjectivity within specific historical, social formations, the resulting production of subject positions, and the ways these positions oppress or liberate. As Nancy Fraser has argued, subordinated groups have repeatedly constituted subaltern counterpublics in which they "invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs."[67] The friendship poem became an alternate discourse both within the genre of poetry and within the larger culture. It became an increasingly important subject position in the eighteenth century, as it encouraged both a private, interiorized identity and various social selves that ranged from benefactor to political citizen. Dorothy Baker once wrote that the *précieux* discourse "was full of heady alternatives to

reality."[68] In fact, as we have seen, the friendship poem became a place to discuss particular kinds of very immediate, pressing realities.

Girls and young women lived in a world of women, and many poems revel in the pleasures of friendship. In their amusements, occupations, and educations they were largely separated from men, and the development of important, intimate friendships was, as Sedgwick says, "the most natural thing in the world." She points out that they were "of the same gender, people grouped together under the single most determinative diacritical mark of social organization, people whose economic, institutional, emotional, physical needs and knowledge [had] so much in common."[69] Frances Seymour wrote to, probably, the Countess of Pomfret:

> We sometimes ride, and sometimes walk;
> We play at chess, or laugh, or talk;
> Sometimes, beside the chrystal stream,
> We meditate some serious theme;
> Or in the grot, beside the spring,
> We hear the feathered warblers sing.
> Shakespeare (perhaps) an hour diverts,
> Or Scott directs to mend our hearts.
> With Clarke God's attributes we explore;
> And, taught by him, admire them more.
> Gay's Pastorals sometimes delight us,
> Or Tasso's grisly spectres fright us.[70]

The couplets, although they flow conversationally, are self-contained amusements, and the poem moves from these "sublime" thoughts and pleasures to "I sink at once—and make a cheese; / Or see my various poultry fed." Developing the image of her life as full of contrasts, Seymour describes going from evening prayer to cards, "though I confess the change . . . is somewhat strange," and from a healthful supper of things their land produces, "Eggs, cream, fresh butter, or calves'-feet; / And cooling fruits, or savoury greens— / 'Sparagus, peas, or kidney beans" to "talk of history, Spain, or wit." Rather than disjunction, the contrasts in women's normal days provide harmony and balance and empower and delight.

Friendship poems are full of references to food, and they become a language of their own, markers of hospitality, true friendship, class, and shared satisfaction. For example, Ann Thomas's jovial, idiomatic *To Laura, On the French Fleet parading before Plymouth in August 1779* (1784) ends with the writer remembering her

friend's gifts of nuts and "good red-streaked apples." Mary Leapor begins *The Epistle of Deborah Dough*, "Dearly beloved Cousin, these / Are sent to thank you for your cheese; / The price of oats is greatly fell" (Lonsdale, 209). Mary Jones, whose poetry is filled with salty, no-nonsense observations, creates a hare who will die happy if Jones's friend Mrs. Clayton "owns / My flesh was good, and picks my bones."[71] Like the food, the pleasures described are usually simple and everyday and may follow familiar sequences in women's lives. Mary Masters's Marinda poems *To Marinda, at Parting, A Question to Marinda* (what is delaying her marriage?), and *On Marinda's Marriage* are followed by another sequence, *To Marinda, on the New-year, being the first Year of her Marriage* and another on the same subject, which ends "Bless me, my God, and doubly bless my Friend."[72] Her *To Mrs. M.E. who gave me a Plaister of her own making, when I wrench'd my Ancle* turns on a reference to woman's place as healer in the culture:

> In vain the healing Secret you had known,
> Were not the Judgment to apply, your own.
> Your female Breast a richer Mine can boast,
> Than fam'd *Peru*, or *India*'s Diamond Coast.
> Wisdom is Wealth from worldly Dross refin'd,
> And your's [*sic*] is Wisdom of the noblest Kind.[73]

Some of these poems testify, as *To Mrs. M.E.* does, to the reality and worth of Simone de Beauvoir's counteruniverse. Mary Barber's *To Mrs. Strangeways Horner, with a letter from my Son* rejoices in the pleasure she finds in having a friend to share the news that her son has won a prize at the University of Dublin and has sent it to her.[74] Within a letter to a friend at Croft, Masters explains how she and "Mrs. P." occupy themselves in the winter in London:

> To wear away Time as we can, we full oft,
> Sit together and chat of the People at *Croft;*
> Your House and your Gardens, your Self and your Spouse,
> Your pigeons and Chickens, your Pigs and your Cows;
> . . . . . .
> Your Manner of Living, your Gifts to the Poor;
> The *Allens*, and *Chaytors*, and fifty Folks more;
> Of more than you think on we constantly prate,
> For, Madam, you know that dull Silence I hate.
> At last, when no more can be thought of, or said,
> We call for our Candles and trip up to Bed.[75]

This amusing poem written for a friend is hardly high art, but it gives us insight into the pleasures and uses of poetry among friends, as well as a timeless sketch of what ordinary people talked about.

Many of these poems describe women's ordinary occupations, joys, frustrations, and griefs and their unique situations, as Masters does when she begins *To the same [Mrs. Lombe], on the Birth of her Son:* "Rise, drooping Muse, contract thy falling Wing, / My Friend is safe, and thou hast leave to sing."[76] In two poems she shows a horrible awareness of infant mortality: "[Let] no Obstruction stop his precious Breath, / Or strong Convulsion bring untimely Death."[77] Although these lines are not poetic, their sense of dread and immediacy testifies to the fact that in contrast to diaries, journals, and letters, women's poems are an important, neglected form of life-writing. One of the poems on the death of one of her sister's twins at the moment of birth is filled with images of the balance in "God giveth and taketh away." She asks, "Who could the cruel Pangs of Child-birth bear, / If not supported by thy tender Care?" She recollects that those pains are God's justice (a reference to the punishment of Eve) *and* goodness, that there is grief for one twin but joy about the other, and the poem ends, "Then blessed be the Lord of Life and Death."[78] Masters's characteristic heroic couplets and almost complete lack of figurative language give this poem clarity and dignity and are appropriate for her searching reflection. In contradiction to the commonplace that the deaths of children were so frequent that parents grieved less than they do today, these poems record strong sorrow and repeatedly refer to dashed hopes and painfully vivid aspirations held for children. Ann Murry's *Epitaph on Miss Martha Mary Ann Hughes* has a typical line: "[Death's] rig'rous laws a Parent's hopes destroy, / By snatching to himself their pride and joy."[79] "Ye leave her parents' wounded hearts to mourn / Their hopes, their comforts, perish'd in her urn," Seward writes in *On Eliza Whateley.*[80] Masters insightfully notes that her friend Mrs. Lombe hugged her daughter and "[would] promise to her self a future Friend."[81]

In a few lines, occasional poems offer sympathy, understanding, amusement, and serious thoughts. They share news as well as feelings, and they continue to seem "feminine" in the best sense of the word. Many, many poets wrote verses to wish friends happy birthday, and these poems give clear and rather poignant images of their idea of happiness. Masters wrote nearly a dozen of them, many with witty statements about age: "Be long preserv'd, free from uneasy Cares, / And not grow old in any thing but Years."[82] Mary Jones wrote a birthday poem almost every year. Some of the best take women through the stages of their lives, concluding with a wish for an easy death and the promise of reunion in heaven.

The metaphors for death are especially rich, such as Carter's of the soul's "farthest Stage" in *To the Same [Miss Lynch]. April the 9th*, *To Mrs. [Montagu]*, and *To Miss Hall. 1746*. *To the Same* begins with the graceful hope that "The smiling Year with some new Pleasure crown" and then promises that her soul will become more beautiful and radiant even as the beauty of youth fades.[83] Many of these poems teach women about aging gracefully and the special pleasures of self-knowledge. Carter's voice in these poems has been described as "almost muse-like,"[84] and *To the Same* has a tone of assurance and confidence that complements the message well.

"Yet still thou bid'st me write! Ah! poor Relief!" Brereton writes in *To Mrs. Whitmore on the Death of her Son*, and that statement explaining the genesis of the poem demonstrates that women turned to women poets for understanding, consolation, and connotative expressions of experience—all important uses of poetry throughout the ages. Certainly Whitmore knew that Brereton had lost two infant sons, and the poem is about women's shared grief and disappointment. Quite different is *To Stella*, by Hester Chapone. It promises Stella, who is suffering from "blasted hope and luckless love," to trust that friendship will "close the recent wound."[85] This imaginative poem associates friendship with "laughing Liberty's triumphant train" and concludes with an invitation:

> Fly, then, dear Stella, fly th' unequal strife,
> Since Fate forbids that Peace should dwell with Love!
> Friendship's calm joys shall glad thy future life,
> And Virtue lead to endless bliss above.
>
> (Lonsdale, 238–40)

The intimacy of friendship poems is enhanced by domestic glimpses and anecdotes, and women who wrote them learned that such references could throw a cloak of modesty over feminist statements and poems on subjects increasingly deemed inappropriate for women poets.

Occasionally we get a glimpse of a middle-class woman's working life. Charlotte Brereton's *To Miss A[nn]a M[ari]a Tra[ver]s. An Epistle from Scotland* describes her day as a governess. She slips out of bed early and reads for pleasure, then joins her charges:

> We eat, sip and talk as long as we're able;
> For those who plain bread and butter can't eat,
> There's orange, and jelly, and honey so sweet.
>
> (Lonsdale, 189)

The day is filled with active pleasures and good companionship and ends with her back in her "nest," "writing to you, to give myself pleasure." Just as newsy, matter-of-fact letters between friends usually reveal glimpses of the way experiences feel, so do these poems. This one includes two lines admitting that she has "grown so prudent and tame, / You hardly would know me except by my name" (190). Very different, of course, are the poems about work written by the laboring-class poets, as exemplified by Mary Collier's shocking lines in *The Woman's Labour*, "Until with heat and work, 'tis often known, / Not only sweat but blood runs trickling down."[86]

There are friendship poems in all of the forms in which poetry can be written. Epistles may predominate, but there are odes and even sonnets and georgics. Philips can write lovely lines, such as the eloquent, economic lines, "So softly moves the Bark which none controuls, / As are the meetings of agreeing Souls" (Philips, 20), but it was the later poets who stretched the levels of diction and sometimes produced ambitious, highly polished examples of the type. Jane Brereton's *On the Birth-day of the Honour'd Mrs. Myddelton* is a Horatian ode with a central stanza describing the ideal woman, which Myddelton personifies. Charlotte Smith's *To Friendship* addresses friendship, "To thy soft solace may my sorrows steal!" A fluid, Petrarchan sonnet, its octet begins, " 'Tis thine, O Nymph! with balmy hands to bind / The wounds inflicted in Misfortune's storm." Consistently set in private rooms, enclosed garden spaces, in the evening or at night, settings that enhance the intimacy, these poems often associate their resolutions with the emerging of the moon from behind clouds, the coming of day, or the opening up of a space. Smith writes, "Like the fair moon, the mild and genuine ray / Through Life's long evening shall unclouded last." She and Carter seem to have in mind a tradition of associating the moon with Diana in literary texts about independence from men. The moon signified "a reliance on and alliance with the goddess,"[87] whose heroic femininity and chastity brought together the Old Testament heroines prominent in Finch's work and the eighteenth century's cult of modesty.

Masters evokes the private space that she associates with her friend and writes from it in *To Clemene:*

> Where'ever I go, or whatsoe'er I do,
> How pleasing 'tis to tell it all to you!
> Hear then, auspicious Mistress of my Theme,
> What now I dictate by a purling Stream.
> . . . . . .

Here oft in Silence by myself I rove,
In Paths perplex'd thro' all the naked Grove,
Yet find a Pleasure in the sylvan Scene
. . . . . .
The Violet does in purpose Odours rise,
Which with descending Hand I strait arrest,
Pluck the young Flow'rs, and plant them in my Breast:
And then reflect, were my Clemene here,
How soon would I the Vernal Pride transfer?
Pleas'd, if I could the early Buds convey
To thee more sweet, to Thee more fair than they.[88]

This quiet poem follows a path of reflection through the natural scene, winds conventionally toward thoughts of heaven, but always returns with fresh references to Clemene. These, like the complimentary passage on the violets, are the most original parts of the poem. Masters's *Return'd in Answer to a poetical Compliment from Miss ——* is a modest poem that gives powerful insight into an intimate friendship. We can tell that both women are at least occasional poets, for Masters answers the "poetical Compliment" with her poem, in which she calls the friend "best of earthly Friends" and thanks her for praise and encouragement. The conclusion of the poem alludes to the occasion for the poetical compliment and the playful familiarity between the two women, as Masters asks her friend to prepare

Ambrosial Cakes and nectar Tea,
Fit for the Muses, or for Me:
This Day, the same that gave her Birth,
She means to pass with thee in Mirth:
To Chat and Laugh, and be as free,
As any moral Maid can be.[89]

Incrementally women poets writing between 1660 and 1750 develop a safe space in which women read, write, encourage one another to write, and carry on happy lives in a largely female world. Somewhat paradoxically, the degree of their awareness of their sex and their gender position empowered them.

In these poems women, their experiences, and their feelings are important, which was decidedly not the case in the society at large. Women are elevated not only because they are "conscious" and occupy the subject position but also be-

cause they project conscious worth and describe other women with the same. These poems protect and nurture creative identities. At every point we find examples of what they brought from the mainstream tradition and reanimated, perhaps as subtle kinds of reaffirmation of their own worth as imaginative beings. It was, for instance, a common trope that things men created revealed their souls, as Laetitia Pilkington affirms in *Delville, the Seat of the Rev. Dr. Delany.* She calls his estate "best belov'd Retreat" and quickly recognizes its prospects as the "Emblem of their Master's Mind" (Tucker, 33–34). Pilkington carries the same conception into her descriptions of her friend, the poet Constantia Grierson; she describes most of Grierson's "various and Beautiful" writings as images of the woman she knows well.[90]

Foreshadowing the modern recognition of women's special art forms, these poets compliment friends on their needlework, their painting, their singing, and their other private-sphere activities and then "read" their souls in these creations. One of the best of these poems is the well-constructed *On seeing Mrs. Eliz. Owen, now Lady Longueville, in an embroider'd Suit, all her own Work*, by Jane Brereton. The description of the flowers is unusually concrete, and the conclusion teaches us how to "read" her work:

> Her Fancy and Judgment are seen in her Dress;
> In her Converse, good Sense, and good Humour we find,
> And own her fine Outside excell'd by her Mind.[91]

Brereton emphasizes that Lady Longueville's beautiful suit is "all her own work," a claim of originality and artistic agency. Rozsika Parker notes that "paradoxically, while embroidery was employed to inculcate femininity in women, it also enabled them to negotiate the constraints of femininity."[92] The needle allows them a freedom of expression otherwise forbidden to them, and this expression as characterized by Brereton is the show of both individuality and autonomy. And indeed, this creation by Lady Longueville does more than please the eye. No matter what the world thinks of women or of Mrs. Longueville, as Brereton writes, her suit testifies to her "fancy," judgment, good sense, and excellent mind.

By assigning feminine art the powerful role of expressing an autonomous intellect, Brereton dispels the insignificance of women's work. Parker points out that "when women embroider, it is seen not as art, but primarily as the expression of femininity. And, crucially, it is categorized as craft."[93] This distinction between "craft" (the inconsequential) and "art" (the significant) is important to Brereton's argument. Because women can work under the veil of anonymity that "craft"

affords, the products of their work are safe from critical scrutiny. Women's occasional and friendship poetry can be contained beneath this shielding umbrella, and the rare engagement with critics found in these poets' work suggests that they knew it. Brereton makes it known that the distinction between craft and art is inaccurate, and indeed women's work is art in the sense that both afford and exert power. The power of the suit, and the power of women's creation, is that it allows insight into their psychology and affords them not only a means of expression but also a means of controlling their representation.

Displaying both her learning and her ingenuity, Brereton turns to classical allusions in her friendship poems to combine images of feminine power with her friends' own acts of creation, as in *To Mrs. Roberts on her Spinning*. Her choices are deliberate and pointed and signify both the prophetic and the subversive nature of women's art. As Brereton's own faith in women's aesthetics grew, so did the power of the women she portrays in her friendship verse. The poem describing Sybil Egerton's anthem in church is prefaced by the lines,

> In Maro's Fiction, the *Cumean* Maid
> Conducts *Aeneas* to the Elizian Shade;
> The *Sybil*'s pow'rful Call soon gains Access,
> To their imagin'd Realms of Harmony and Bliss.
>
> What Thanks do we our real *Sybil* owe,
> For giving us a Taste of Heav'n, below?
> . . . . . .
> When to her Maker's Praise, she tunes her Voice;
> What Soul's not rapt, what Heart does not rejoyce![94]

Like the mythical, Virgilian Sybil's prophecy, Sybil Egerton's art has power beyond the immediate moment. It is here that the transformative sublime enters into Brereton's work, giving the poet both vision and inspiration. Sybil Egerton's song "on the Royal Poet's Words bestows, / Such moving Airs" that she raises a vision of David, the poet king, who, "Charm'd with the Notes she so divinely sings, / Strive to awake his Harp, and animate the Strings."[95] In its ability to give both a "Taste of Heav'n" and a vision, women's art takes on a transformative power celebrated in the art itself. Recognizing that singing is interpretation, just as paraphrasing psalms is, which she had done, Brereton identifies women's agency and creativity in activities often considered derivative.

Harmony remains an important theme in friendship poems, and Elizabeth

Carter's *On hearing Miss [Lynch] sing* plays on the word. The song Lynch sings is harmonious, of course, and it is the springboard to reflections on how she is a figure of harmony:

> While Harmony, with each attractive Grace,
> Plays in the fair Proportions of her Face;
> Where each soft Air, engaging and serene,
> Beats Measure to the well-tun'd Mind within:
> Alike her Singing and her Silence move,
> Whose Voice is Music, and whose Looks are Love.[96]

The sudden phrase "whose Looks are Love" turns the poem into a modernized version of the celebration of the ideal friendship. This poem reinforces the earlier *To Miss [Lynch]. 1743* in associating Lynch, their friendship, and harmony: "Each finer Sense, that tunes the Mind to Love; / Whence all that Harmony, and Fire, that join, / To form a Temper, and a Soul like thine."[97]

Such poems and conceptions of women's art are legion. Rather than ordering the arts in a hierarchy, the women apprehend them in egalitarian terms, as products of a collaborative, creative community. Masters uses selection of colors and aromas in a nosegay as similar evidence of Clemene's taste.[98] Brereton draws a similarly clever lesson in *To Mrs. Roberts on her Spinning:* "The Wheel, best Emblem of our worldly State; / Still changing, varying, always moving found, / Where high and low, alternate, take their round." Brereton's birthday wish for her is that she will continue to manage the changing scenes of life with the same skill and discipline with which she does the wheel and her present life.[99] Grierson's compliment to Grace, Countess of Dysert, is written from the point of view of Cupid, whom Dysert had painted on a fan. "In various Forms have I been shown," the poem begins, and Cupid compliments her for understanding love for what it should be: "And I to Mortals shine confess'd, / Both in your Paint, and in your Breast."[100] This graceful compliment reflects the century's theory of representation, one found in many "sister art" poems, including Dryden's *To the Pious Memory of . . . Mrs Anne Killigrew.* Rather paradoxically, conventional, iconographical objects and poses were used to capture the individual's temperament, rank, and self-conception (some combination of what she was and what she wished to be).[101] Portraits, of course, cannot be "read" without this "language," and when poetry incorporated these elements it was attempting to fix in the observer-reader's memory the essential character of the woman. In poems such as *A Description of One of the Pieces of Tapestry at Long-leate,* by Finch, they imagine

how ideas might be expressed in different media. Philomela continues to displace Sappho as the emblem of the poet, and the reason came to be as much a recognition of these different arts as a recognition of the resistance to the threat of silencing. In *The Nightingal* [*sic*] Sarah Dixon captures this new mood:

> Forgive me, *Philomel*, if I no more
> Can *Tereus* matchless Cruelty deplore;
> I must believe thy Sense of Grief is past,
> Who so melodiously the Night canst waste,
> Nor can the pointed Thorn annoy thy Breast,
> Was ever Sorrow in such Notes exprest?
> O, no, the Gods, in Pity to thy Wrong,
> Gave in Exchange, for a frail Woman's Tongue,
> A last Power to please with thy inimitable Song.
> Indulgent of thy Fate, they now assign,
> That every Glory of the *Spring* be thine;
> Where, undisturb'd thou may'st its Joys possess,
> And listening Ears, with me, thy tuneful Numbers bless.[102]

Just as women valued their friends' talents in needlework and the arts and understood them as emblems of their character, they valued their friends' ability to write occasional poetry to commemorate events. Sarah Dixon responds to a friend in *To a Lady, Who desir'd Me to Answer her* LOVER*'s Letter:*

> But, ah! how hard 'twas to express,
> Even while I felt the Flame.
>
> A Stranger to the happy Swain,
> Who does your Thoughts employ;
> I may by my unlucky Pen
> Your growing Hopes destroy.

She acknowledges that friends wrote such poems for each other but concludes that she cannot take the risk and "Nature must dictate from the Heart, / And *Love* himself teach Love."[103] At the beginning of her dedication of *Original Poems on Several Occasions* (1769) to Mrs. Stratford, Clara Reeve quotes the conclusion of *An Epitalamium*, which she wrote for Stratford. By doing so, she draws together the little poems written for friends' notable events and the crucial encouragement to write and publish that women poets received. Mrs. Stratford has, she says, "always cherished and cultivated every spark of genius that has fallen within

your observation, the indulgence and encouragement that I in particular have received from you . . . render you the most proper person to give countenance and support to the present undertaking."

Friendship poems inscribe the encouragement women received from friends to write, to extend their art, and to publish, and like Mrs. Longueville's suit, they celebrate individual expression. Hundreds of lines addressed to women friends are like this from *Written to a near Neighbour in a tempestuous Night*, by Henrietta Knight: "You bid my muse not cease to sing" (Lonsdale, 224). Some of the women turn them into amusing, modest protests even as they demonstrate their poetic talent. Carter's *From Miss [Wilbraham]* is one of her best friendship poems:

> Eliza bids me boldly try
> To pluck the Laurel Bough,
> And with unfading Garlands deck
> My unambitious Brow.
>
> When Friendship's Voice thus soothing calls
> Thro' Vanity to stray,
> Tho' conscious of the rash Attempt,
> I readily obey.[104]

Carter received and gave consistent encouragement to write. In 1755, for instance, Chapone had written Carter when it was beginning to appear that she would devote her life to translations: "You ought to be an original writer, and let your works be translated by those who can only help the world to words, but not to new ideas or new knowledge."[105] Carter took the same privilege in *To Mrs. Montagu:* "No more, my Friend, pursue a distant Throne, / While nearer Objects call Reflexion Home."[106] A passage from Barbauld's *To Mrs. P[riestley], With some Drawings of Birds and Insects* (1773) concludes with an important truth: "Amanda bids; at her command again / I seize the pencil, or resume the pen; / No other call my willing hand requires, / And friendship, better than a Muse inspires" (M&K, 6). It is hard to find a woman poet who did not leave poems like these, and they are an unbroken chain. Finch's *To the Honorable the Lady Worsley at Long-leate, Who had most obligingly desired my corresponding with her by Letters* and *To Flavia, By whose perswasion, I undertook the following Paraphrase* suggest how integrated writing and women friends were in her mind. As Hugh Jenkins has pointed out, many of Finch's poems are "informed" by "the search for models of female poetry or inspiration."[107]

Although friendships or even supportive acquaintanceships between women

poets or poets and a friend or two became the norm, eighteenth-century women were always somewhat isolated. If they were not separated geographically, their sex determined limitations on their integration into any intellectual or literary community. Thus, the longitudinal as well as the horizontal community of women poets remained important. As Donna Landry has said, there is "a complex, if largely unacknowledged, intertextuality with female poetic precursors"[108] and, what is more surprising, a still unrecognized multidimensional intertextuality and, often, shared enterprise among contemporaries. "Leapor's development as a writer is closely connected to her friendships with other women," Richard Greene writes, and points out that she consistently addresses her poems to women, especially those who "wrote verse in the normal course of friendship."[109] Sometimes friendship poems reveal a self-conscious selection of such imaginary literary communities. Reeve mentions Philips, Carter, and Lennox in her *To My Friend Mrs.* ——, and these three poets' lives, aspirations, and publications reinforce an image of herself that is somewhat at odds with her overall assertion that women are not men's equals. On the one hand, the poets she names were exemplary in virtue and well integrated into masculine literary circles; on the other hand, they were ambitious and erudite and not ashamed to be so. More than the precedents, competitors, and influences that earlier poets always are for poets, for women they were imaginary encouragers and barrier surmounters. These earlier examples had an empowering effect, as the litany of poems that mention Rowe attests.

Poems such as Barber's *To . . . Lady Torrington, with some Verses her Ladyship commanded me to send Her* claimed "permission" not only to write but to publish from such relationships. "Of Writing I'll no more repent, / Nor think my Time unwisely spent," Barber writes,[110] and she wrote a number of other similar poems, such as *To . . . Lady Elizabeth Brownlow, upon desiring me to send her some of my Poems.* Mary Jones's collection of poems brings a network of friends to life, and the final section of her book is modestly titled, *Rhymes to the Hon. Miss [Martha] Lovelace; now Lady Henry Beauclerk.* The final poem in it explains, "The songs I sung you kindly took / And bid me put 'em in a book."[111] The distinguished list of subscribers to her book could only have come about with the aid of Lady Beauclerk, one of Queen Caroline's maids of honor.[112] Betty Rizzo has described Bridget Freemantle as "unusually determined" in her efforts to get Leapor's poems published.[113] Barbauld's *Poems* is dedicated to Lady Mary West. Ann Murry writes a friend, "You challenge me to write in Rhyme, / Tho' I have neither sense or time."[114] And so the litany continues, and women and their

networks played a prominent part in the increasingly common subscription publication of women's poetry.[115] Dustin Griffin has documented how many titled women were patrons,[116] and during her reign Queen Caroline becomes friend, muse, and patron (real and fancied). In Brereton's *To the Queen* the Muses themselves go to her as to their own Apollo's court.[117]

Friendship poems that encourage writing and publishing are most common among the gently bred, educated women poets. Although Finch circulated most of her friendship poems rather than publishing them, we can see that the friendship poem became a major place for her to write about writing.[118] She seems to have enjoyed selecting different forms for them, for some, such as the one to Mrs. Randolph, are Horatian epistles, others are dialogues, and a few are among her most experimental, as is *To the Hon. Mrs. H——n*, which is written in single-rhymed octosyllable tercets. Mary Savage, encouraged by Lady Miller's Bath-Easton games, explains why women poets will not be silenced and begins with friendship:

> While there's a heart that friendship's pow'r can feel;
> While there's a heart, inspir'd by heavenly zeal;
> While tender lovers, fear to speak their woe,
> While blushing fair ones fear true love to show;
> While truth sublime, shall o'er the mind prevail,
> While wit shall flourish, and while beauty's frail;
> While lays, poetic, from this vase resound,
> By genius prompted, and by Miller crown'd;
> So long shall every tender feeling breast,
> That can by joy be rais'd or grief opprest,
> Confess the bliss, poetick lays inspire,
> And sing the praises of APOLLO's lyre.[119]

These economical lines bring together some of the most elevated and most mundane reasons for writing, and they emphasize the fact that poetry is both an emotional and intellectual outlet for poets and a place where readers can go to find their feelings expressed.

The experience of writing is a common subject, and many witty poems lament the vagaries of inspiration and treat the Muses as moody friends. Inspiration comes more reliably from their living friends or their feeling for their topic. The Muses tell them so, too. In *A Familiar Epistle. To Miss Coker* the Muses tell Murry that her subjects, Coker and virtue, will supply all the inspiration she needs.[120] In

Address to the Muse, and Her Answer Savage assures the Muse that she is not asking for help "to indulge, in the hopes of applause; / Nor to speak to the men, in defence of our cause." Instead, she is asking because of her friend: "But the season demands that my friend should be clear, / That I wish her much mirth and a happy new year." The Muse in turn twits her for lack of ambition. Her friend knows her feelings, the Muse says, and would not believe them changed. Then she runs through major poetic kinds in saying, "If serious I came—'twas too much for your mind; / In sentiment drest, I was thought too refin'd; / If satire I nam'd—in a fright you would say, / They surely with int'rest the debt will repay." The poem ends with the Muse demanding that Savage "follow your genius or let me alone."[121] In this unusual way, Savage discusses the types of poetry being written and, in the conclusion, gives women permission to follow their inclinations freely.

Although largely unnoticed, these poems, like Savage's *Address to the Muse*, encourage women to originality and ambitious statement. They celebrate the freedom to choose both subjects and form, and many women poets recognized the kinds of innovations their friends were making. They picked up the threads of one another's contributions to themes and celebrated and imitated what they saw. They challenged one another, as Finch did when she wrote, "Let me hear no more of Swains / . . . / Who ne'er had Pastoral or reed."[122] And the evidence of their claim to freedom is everywhere, as in these lines to Lady Worsley by Finch: "Then shou'd my Hand snatch from the Muses store / Transporting Figures n'ere expos'd before / Something to Please so moving and so new / As not our Denham or our Cowley knew."[123] In her mock progress poem *Apollo's Edict* Mary Barber puts together a longer list of hackneyed phrases and actually assumes the voice of Apollo, who orders:

> Let beaten Paths no more be trac'd;
> But study to correct your Taste,
> No simile shall be begun
> With *rising* or with *setting Sun*
> . . . . . .
> If *Anna's* happy Reign you praise,
> Say not a Word of *Halcyon-Days:*
> Nor let my Vot'ries shew their Skill,
> In apeing Lines from *Cooper's Hill;*
> For, know, I cannot bear to hear
> The Mimickry of *deep, yet clear.*[124]

Her progress poem advances through allusions such as this one to John Denham, which she expects her poetry-reading audience to recognize.

These poems can be serious, as is Grierson's beautifully structured *To Mrs. Mary Barber, under the Name of Sapphira*. In sixty economical lines she places Barber's contributions in the context of English poetic practices:

> Long has the Warrior's, and the Lover's Fire,
> Employ'd the Poet, and ingross'd the Lyre;
> And justly too the World might long approve
> The Praise of *Heroes* and of virtuous *Love;*
> Had Tyrants not usurp'd the Hero's Name,
> Nor low Desires debas'd the Lover's Flame;
> If on those Themes all Triflers had not writ,
> Guiltless of Sense, or Elegance, or Wit.
>
> Far different Themes We in thy Verses view;
> Themes, in themselves, alike sublime and new:
> Thy tuneful Labours all conspire to show
> The highest Bliss the Mind can taste below;
> . . . . . .
> So Elegant, and so Refin'd thy Praise,
> As great Minds, at once, might mend and please:
> No florid Toys in pompous Numbers drest;
> But justest Thoughts, in purest Stile, exprest;
> Whene'er thy Muse designs the Heart to move,
> The melting Reader must with Tears approve;
> Or when, more gay, her spritely Satire bites,
> 'Tis not to wound, but to instruct, She writes.
>
> (Tucker, 136–37)

Grierson recognizes Barber as part of a movement toward a more conversational, "pure" style and carefully defends her use of satire. The poem ends with Grierson's praise for Barber as her friend and as a virtuous person with the ideally feminine trait of having a soul "form'd for every social Care" (138). She is celebrating the originality and significance of "foremothers" and sisters, as well as women's distinctive contributions to literature. This poem is a tightly written, concise version of a familiar subject for women: the admonition to choose subjects and verse forms freely, resisting all pressures and protecting the mental space in which they write. A seldom-noticed aspect of these poems is the consid-

erable technical variety in these poems, another sign of women's assertion of their freedom. For instance, although in tetrameter couplets, Savage's *Address to the Muse* is idiomatic and fast paced, and it uses the caesura and lines composed of one iambic and three anapestic feet especially effectively; in contrast, Finch's *To the Nightingale* is formal, metaphoric, but just as explicit: "Poets, wild as thee, were born, / Pleasing best when unconfin'd." She promises to "set my Numbers to thy Layes. / Free as thine shall be my Song" (Reynolds, 267–68).

Some of these encouraging poems are lighthearted and stress the element of play in writing poetry. Mary Savage's *Letter to my Friend E.B.* is typical:

> No longer my friend will I silent remain,
> In hopes of a brilliant poetical strain;
> But free from controul, my pen shall display,
> The thought of the instant, or serious, or gay."[125]

As might be expected, some of these poems are deeply intertextual, and the enjoyment in writing is inscribed rather than stated. In a poem few would associate with her, Elizabeth Singer Rowe appears to rework Finch's delightful *Invitation to Dafnis* in her *To Madam S—— at the Court.* Choosing to lure her friend from the court because Finch's poem celebrates life away from it, she echoes an impressive number of familiar poetic forms about intimate relationships, including the pastoral and the cavaliers' joyous, "Come live with me and be my love" type.

> I.
> Come prethee leave the Courts
> *And range the Fields with me;*
> A thousand pretty Rural sports
> I'le here invent for thee.
>
> II.
> Involv'd in *blissful innocence*
> Wee'l spend the shining day,
> Untoucht with that mean influence
> The duller world obey.[126]

Throughout her career Rowe wrote friendship poems, few of which are ever anthologized today, but at least one of them, *To Celinda*, is becoming fairly familiar to modern readers.[127] The impressive technical mastery of Finch and Rowe and their more modern sensibility raised the status and increased interest in the form.

In fact, in *Letter to My Friend* Savage sets a standard for herself that the rest of the poem displays; as with so many of her sister poets, her longing for originality and achievement is clear:

> No matter the cause whence reflections arise,
> 'Tis the sorting his thoughts — that makes the man wise;
> A work which while young, hardly ever goes fast,
> For of faculties, (sure) we use judgment the last;
> Wit in vain may refine, and learning display,
> Without judgment assists, to clear trifles away.[128]

Mary Leapor's very imaginative progress poem *The Proclamation of Apollo* salutes "Artemisia," her friend and encouraging patron Bridget Freemantle: "May *Artemisia* hear my Strain, / I quote the Sages once again."[129] A fight breaks out among poets after Apollo sends "a Troop" into the large crowd to seat them for dinner. As any reader of *Pamela* and *Persuasion* knows, where people were seated at family dinners as well as state ones was a matter of much consideration and often resentful interpretation. Apollo's "troop" turns out to be critics, wittily described:

> with Caps and Spears
> Much like *Parnassian* Granadiers,
> With surly Eyes and sour Faces,
> To part the Crowd and give 'em Places.
> The poets' reactions are predictable:
> Each thinking he was plac'd too low:
> This vow'd to make all Creatures fear him;
> And That cou'd bear no Creature near him
> One seem'd to talk with mighty Spirit,
> Of baffl'd Worth and slighted Merit.

Apollo has to take command, and he reminds them that their fights merely amuse the world at their expense. A poet of great sensuality and, especially, gustatory imagery, Leapor mingles food with names of poets as they sit down in peace and she begins her progress:

> The first bold Course was brought along
> In Dishes made of *Homer's* Song.
> Next *Virgil* on the Table shines,
> And then smooth *Ovid's* tender Lines.

> The gay Desert expos'd to view,
> Of modern Authors not a few,
> Heroicks in the midst preside,
> With Elegy on either Side.

Apollo proclaims, "The Statutes of *Parnassian* tender / The Stocks to ev'ry such Offender," and Leapor's poem turns into a ranking of poetic kinds. She moves from the love elegy to the rest of the forms styled dessert, such as epigrams and mottos. The poem is filled with wit, irony, and even satire, as she spins off *The Dunciad* to have each dunce bathed in magic so that he will have the confidence "to push / Through the broad World without a Blush."

The pressuring of women toward restricted numbers of subjects and forms becomes increasingly clear by midcentury. Clara Reeve's unsettling *To My Friend Mrs.* ——, published more than twenty years after these poems, is a stark contrast to this optimistic prediction of a golden age of poets. It gives a general sense of the changed milieu with a central, telling narrative of Reeve's experience. She begins with Pope's famous excuse for writing:

> What tho' while yet an infant young,
> The numbers trembled on my tongue;
> As youth advanc'd, I dar'd aspire,
> And trembling struck the heavenly lyre.
> What by my talents have I gained?
> By those I lov'd to be disdain'd,
> By some despis'd, by other fear'd,
> Envy'd by fools, by witlings jeer'd.
> See what success my labours crown'd,
> By birds and beasts alike disown'd.
> Those talents that were once my pride,
> I find it requisite to hide;
> For what in man is most respected,
> In woman's form shall be rejected.[130]

Reeve's poem includes a survey of poetic kinds and notes that women write them, but she concludes, "Life and vivacity I grant, / But weight and energy they want." Perhaps prophetically she mentions that women "with strong and lively fancies / Write Essays, novels, and romances," the forms she would take up and excel in later in life. This 1769 poem and others of that time show women being domesti-

cated and, therefore, "beaten away" from many kinds of poetic subjects, to use the phrases of twentieth-century feminist critics of the novel. Margaret Doody writes: "The period of experiment and playful diversity did not last. Women's poetry began to be recategorised into its own sphere and there seems to be a growing anxiety about the suitability of topics. . . . In the 1760s, with the extreme domesticity of women's 'place' promulgated so effectively by Rousseau in his *Émile*, it perhaps became harder for a woman to write without becoming conventional and diffident."[131] The pressures came from many directions, including from poets who were relatively supportive of women. William Shenstone, then an influential voice, had insisted that the pastoral was "especially suited for ladies," and some women poets protested such edicts. Darwall, probably in covert dialogue with him, expressed in *Liberty, an Elegy* what Ann Messenger called "her profound sense of frustration at being trapped in the pastoral."[132]

As legislating every aspect of women's behavior became a national preoccupation, their friendships continued to be scrutinized and discouraged. The friendship poem and the lifestyles of poets like Carter, Talbot, and Lennox made the reality and practices of female friendship more visible and seemed to suggest new opportunities for female alliances and even influence. As Susan Lanser reminds us, "Unprecedented publicity for female friendship . . . surfaced in seventeenth-century Europe and became institutionalized in eighteenth-century painting, poetry, fiction and letters by women and men." She sees female friendship moving from private intimacies to public relations that "emerged through women's agency as a powerful resource in the struggle for autonomy and authority" and that "implicated women in the consolidation of gentry-class interests."[133] Once identified as *public* relations, friendships between women become both more widely empowering *and* more subject to the disciplining forces of the hegemony. Although Carter's life offered a possible lifestyle for women, especially in a time when Great Britain had a surplus of women, that she cultivated her image as the expert maker of puddings as well as translations testifies to restrictive social forces.

By the end of the century women had propagated a new, less threatening definition of *friend* that emphasized the socializing or even disciplining powers of friendship. Charlotte Lennox, who also wrote friendship poems, defines a friend in *Euphemia* (1790), a novel with ideal female friends, as "a witness of the conscience, a physician of secret griefs, a moderator of prosperity, and a guide in adversity."[134] Each of these roles has a moral dimension, a responsibility for making each a better person. Lennox may even be invoking the concept of the philosopher-physician. Geoffrey Sill explains that John Arbuthnot had become

the paradigm of "the modern incarnation of the philosopher-physician," the doctor able "to cure disease by treating the spirit, rather than merely the body of his patients."[135] Women were that for each other.

Women's efforts to establish the idea that their friendships made them more virtuous and temperate gained momentum at midcentury. One of Masters's poems to Cleomene refers to her "improving Converse"; another says that Marinda's "solid Sense and graceful Speech" cultivate her mind; and she thanks Calista in *The Consolations of Friendship* for freeing her from every passion: "Mild, calm, serene, I now resemble Thee."[136] Jane Brereton's friendship poems consistently center on the ways her virtuous friends make her a better person. Many of these poems, such as *On the Death of Mrs. Mary Bennet*, are dignified tributes carefully composed to depict women "in whom there was no Guile," a common charge leveled at women too intimate with wives. Using the common image in friendship poems of the mirror, Susanna Blamire writes,

> 'Tis Friendship holds the faithful glass
> Which lets no faults unnotic'd pass,
> But places them in such a light
> As soften'd meet the conscious sight;
> Amendment soon smooths every feature,
> And shows a less imperfect creature.
>
> (Fullard, 90)

To some extent, this project differentiates men's and women's friendships. Peter Fenves, a theorist of friendship, points out that nothing "is more perilous to friendship than the duty of friends to identify each other's faults," for it carries a risk of loss of respect and brings to the surface the ever-present potential for competition: "Every opportunity for friends to see each other is also a chance for each one to get the better of the other."[137] Some women's poems recognize the first risk but quickly move beyond it. In *The Resolution*, a Greek ode, Savage debates revealing her "folly" and "distressed" heart to her friend but in the antistrophe decides to confide and advises her reader, "To friendship's kind reproof lay bare thy heart."[138]

The desire for true goodness (which often differs from society's more external image of the modest, chaste, quiet woman) and happiness becomes part of the search for the right friend, the friend who will help and also will "mirror" the quest and personality. Mary Robinson's *Stanzas to a Friend* has a fine, dignified autobiographical moment that finds consolation, not competition, in having her failings known:

With THEE, above the taunts of empty pride,
The rigid frowns to youthful error given;
Content in solitude my griefs I'll hide,
Thy voice my counsellor — thy smiles my Heaven.

Continuing the movement toward celebrations of harmonious intellects as well as personalities, she writes,

Pleas'd will I watch the glitt'ring queen of Night
Spread her white mantle o'er the face of Heaven;
And from thy converse snatch the pure delight,
By truth sublime to MENTAL feeling given.

One of the many variants inspired by Gray's *Elegy*, Robinson's poem executes his elegiac quatrains adeptly and concludes with an echo of his conclusion: "Oh! may kind FRIENDSHIP catch my parting sigh, / And cheer with HOPE the terrors of the TOMB."[139]

These women writing between 1740 and 1780 had other major interests to protect that led them to combat the dangerous implications of seeing the sexes as far more different than alike and to attempt to bolster the concept of a relatively ungendered creative identity. Philips could write "If Souls no Sexes have" because it was, if not the dominant opinion,[140] certainly a widespread hypothesis. Sprat's introduction to Abraham Cowley's poems had included the rather offhand statement, "But these Admirers of gentleness without sinews, should know that different Arguments must have different Colours of Speech: that there is a kind of variety of Sexes in Poetry, as well as in Mankind." In 1710 *The Tatler* included this statement, which revises the opinion to the level of essence: "I do not mean it an injury to women, when I say there is sort of Sex in Souls. I am tender of offending them, and know it is hard not to do it on this Subject; but I must go on to say, That the Soul of a Man and that of a Woman are made very unlike."[141] By midcentury men were no longer being "tender" about women's opinions on this subject, and women like Mary Masters were resisting:

Souls have no Sex, not Male, nor Female there,
A manly Mind informs the well-taught Fair.
While Fops have female Follies in Excess,
Who nothing study, but the Art of Dress:
From diff'rent Teaching, diff'rent Notions rise,
Hence Women *less*, and Men appear *more* wise,
But Erudition chang'd, we soon should see,

> What stupid Things these Boasters then would be;
> Whilst Wisdom, Science, ev'ry Art divine,
> In Woman would with fullest Lustre shine.[142]

Making the same point about custom, education, and women's capacity that Mary Wollstonecraft would make many years later, Masters, who confessed that her "Education rose no higher than the Spelling-Book, or the Writing Master," understood clearly the fetters society placed on women and the threat of a binary model of the sexes. Modern critics have found that this notion had become "a poetics of the soul that is also a poetics of gender" and "crippling" by the Romantic period.[143] In another poem in the same 1755 publication, Masters describes a friend as having "manly sense" softened by "female sweetness."[144] This image is common in women's poetry and can be traced back at least as far as Aphra Behn's famous "masculine part, the poet in me." Masters's words are part of an emerging structure of feeling powered by women writers that would construct the ideal person as having a blend of sense (cold reason) and sensibility (humane perceptiveness). Because the friendship poems appear so domestic—written in and about private spaces and intimate feelings—they are the ideal sites for exploring and contesting these myths of femininity.

Poets like Masters adapted and refused to be beaten from the field, and the next generation of women poets expanded the space she would not surrender and became important, public voices. Stuart Curran maintains that poems such as the anonymous *On Reading Mrs. Carter's Poems in Manuscript* are expressions of a woman poet "coming into acknowledged creative identity," which became an "urgently" felt need in the last third of the eighteenth century.[145] The mid-century gendering pressures had actually made protecting women's right to a creative identity critical earlier, and they were fortunate to have encouraging precedents.

Carter once described the need for corners of ballrooms, summerhouse windows, and "saunters" through gardens if conversation were to be carried on with "ease and freedom" on "subjects . . . mighty difficult to introduce" in most social settings.[146] These places, like the friendship poem, encourage confidence and confidences. Yet the space of friendship poems is more a repertory of pleasurable states of mind than of physical places. Both Philips and Finch had illustrated the possibility of a space of autonomy for themselves and a female friend.[147] This space was always primarily in the mind, and the struggle to describe it is part of the struggle to carve out language to describe female experience and emotional

life from male, even patriarchal, discourse. These poems are evidence of Simone de Beauvoir's recognition that "the struggle for freedom is what will enable women freely to forge their own identity unencumbered by patriarchal myths of femininity."[148]

Jane Brereton

The friendship poem was particularly congenial for some women, as it was for Jane Brereton, who wrote many occasional poems to friends.[149] The advertisement to her *Poems on Several Occasions* (1744) reads, "Most of the following Poems, were written for the Amusement of the Author, and three or four select Friends" (xii). Especially in the work of poets who, like her, wrote many friendship poems over a long period of time, the poems became a place for self-representation, self-discovery, and the trying on of invented private and social selves. Her work also displays the great flexibility of the kind in form, subject, and tone.

Her friendship poems give us access to the lives of intelligent gentry women. Many poems, such as *Written in Mr. Law's Treatise on Christian Perfection; being the Gift of Mrs. Myddelton; To Mrs. Mary Hales; Jan. 1, 1728. With Mr. Waller's Poems*, and *To Mrs. Mary Hale; Jan. 1, 1729. With Prior's Poems*, accompany the exchange of gifts of books and contribute to inquiries into the history of reading. Other poems discuss portrait galleries, church anthems, and tea. Brereton wrote these poems in all of the popular forms of her time. Most are in heroic couplets, and she was writing Horatian odes at the same time Montagu was. *Ode. On the Birth-day of the Honour'd Mrs. Myddelton. Feb. 8* is one of the few friendship poems in this form. A later ode for her birthday is written to the tune of "Tweed-Side."

Although she was born in 1685, four years earlier than Montagu, and died in 1740, three years after Rowe, Brereton is seldom discussed with them. Indeed, this fine poet is almost entirely unknown, an example of the fact that talented, early modern women poets with a significant body of work can remain untouched.[150] Brereton followed the then-common pattern of circulating her manuscripts and publishing in print infrequently, most often in periodicals and usually anonymously.[151] She submitted her work to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, including her Melissa poems, published between 1734 and 1736. Her careful, economical verse and numerous imitations and adaptations of well-known poetic forms reflect conscientious study and effort. That she knew the classics and was an avid reader of contemporary poetry is clear. She wrote other kinds of poetry, including didactic poems, religious and political verse, lyrics, and odes, and

many of them are feminized just at the moment at which another poet might make a political or satiric point. She often uses self-deprecating, funny lines. *On the King's Return. In Imitation of the Fourteenth Ode of Horace*, for instance, concludes,

> Let all with grateful Joy abound,
> With Plenty let the Board be crown'd;
> Go, skim the Cream-bowl, bring the Tea,
> To Mirth we'll dedicate this day.
>
> (28)

Many poems by others on this subject are solemn and overblown, but Brereton's approach satires of pretentiousness, then steer away into the private, domestic space in which common people read their newspapers and joined in the national relief that their king was back.

Born in 1685 in Bryn-Griffith, Wales, Brereton was given a good education by her father, but it was after his death that she "discover'd a peculiar Genius for Poetry, which was her chief Amusement; and all of ther Acquaintances encouraged it by the Delight they took in whatever she compos'd."[152] After her marriage to Thomas Brereton in 1711, she moved to London, where she published poems and her husband published poems, plays, and a periodical, *The Criticks.* She and her husband separated in 1721 (he drowned the next year), and she moved to Wrexham, Wales. Brereton offers an example of the kind of poetic life that many women lived, especially as the importance of London for a literary life decreased and periodical publication of poetry exploded.[153] She seldom left home, and because of Cave's contests, his encouragement, and her entertaining verse exchanges with "Fido" in his paper, she had a fairly reliable outlet for her poetry and achieved a modest notoriety.[154]

A few of Brereton's friendship poems focus on female love and longing, as does the superb *Verses on the Loss of a Friend, Written in 1703*, but on the whole there is little of the fervidness found in Philips's work. The poems in the 1744 volume are arranged in roughly chronological order, with the Melissa poems at the back, and show her evolution into a confident artist intent on celebrating women's personal and artistic achievements, on critiquing society, and on claiming agency as a woman and a thinker. One of the earliest of these bold poems is the *Epistle to Mrs. Anne Griffiths, Written from London, 1718*. The poem is framed by the poet's nostalgic longing for the company of her friend, but the majority of

the interior lines are devoted to the subject of literary criticism and writing. Desiring to write verses to allay her "gloomy Thoughts," she asks the Muse for help, but Brereton proves fickle:

> Capricious grown she follows Fortune's Train,
> Nor longer with th' unhappy will remain.
> Where Melancholy reigns, she scorns to stay;
> But still attends the Great, the Rich, the Gay.
> (31)

At this point she reflects on the fortunes of Naso (Ovid), Terence, and Horace. In fact, she is making a statement about the situation and state of mind needed to write good poetry. The Muse, she says, deserts even great writers in time of trouble, and Horace was wise to "secure" himself from want:

> A plenteous easy Life, and prosp'rous State,
> Gay smiling Mirth and chearful Thoughts create:
> Those Gifts, tho' to a mod'rate Genius join'd,
> Brighten the Fancy and elate the Mind.
> (33)

Clearly written before melancholy became *the* poetic mood for composing, the poem perhaps points to the retirement Brereton would seek within a few years: "Oh, how I long with you to pass the Day, / Sedately chearful, innocently gay! / Where *Alyn* glides, to breath my native Air" (35).

Some of the poems gathered in this posthumous collection elude full interpretation and remind us that friendship poems were indeed often private communications between intimate friends.[155] *To Mrs. Roberts on her Spinning,* for example, includes the lines, "So the dull Hours you at your Wheel deceive, / And draw a Web, fit for a Queen to weave" (101). Although the first line can be read to mean that spinning "deceives" time, makes the "dull" hours pass quickly, the second line complicates this reading and is certainly obscure. The poem begins, "Penelope did thus her Time employ," and Roberts is being complimented for her domestic and moral virtues. Penelope's web was, however, a work "never ending, still beginning." In the *Odyssey* she was weaving a web of deception to protect her virtue. She promised to choose a second husband from many importunate suitors when she finished weaving a robe for the funeral canopy for her father-in-law, but every night she unraveled what she had done dur-

ing the day, and when Odysseus returned, he killed the suitors.[156] Whether Brereton is simply referring to wives' endless work or whether there is a specific allegory to Roberts's life can never be known, but the latter seems more likely.

Brereton's work is filled with a kind of irrepressibility, not a forced, blind cheerfulness but a rational authority that makes her speculations on life and death, love and marriage, art and industry, believable. This tempering of emotion by reason is seen over and over in the poems she wrote to console grieving friends, and *A Thought Occasioned at Being Present at the Death of a Friend, May 28, 1720; On the Death of Mrs. Mary Bennet*, and *To the Honourable Miss Stewart, now Countess of Seaforth, on the Death of her Brother, the Honourable Alexander Stewart, esq*, all follow a similar pattern. Brereton's consolations are not mere conventional expressions born in naiveté; indeed, she had much cause for grief and suffering in her own life. It seems that her unrelenting desire to explain—evident in her friendship poems and odes as well—is based on a hard-won philosophy that gave her resilience and tranquillity of mind. Although she expresses the century's deep piety and fashionable longing for death, her verse is likely to dwell more on the glories of heaven than on the grief of earth.

The exception to this, however, is *To Mrs. Whitmore, on the Death of her Son*, the only one of these poems that seems to struggle toward the conclusion that we must "Submit with Rev'rence to th' inflicting Rod, / And own the Hand of an Almighty God" (202). Brereton recognizes that her consolation is "vain," a sentiment repeated in each of the first four lines of the poem, and acknowledges that in writing she " 'Twill vent my own, but not assuage thy Grief." Echoing both Milton and Gray, this searching poem reveals a personal and not entirely friendly relationship to God. Jack Miles writes rather shockingly in *God: A Biography* that God is vindictive, irascible, and even "blood-chilling."[157] At one point he concludes that the mood of the Bible, and therefore of God, is "with impressive frequency . . . one of irritability, denunciation, and angry complaint" (132). Near the end of the book Miles ties together some of his findings about God's personality: God is "a menacing and, if for that reason alone, an overwhelmingly real figure" in Exodus and finally "transferred to Ezra and Nehemiah [the prophets of the last two personal books of the Tanakh] and their associates his responsibility to make civil . . . provision for the Jews" (388–89). As God's representative, and out of jealousy, Nehemiah cursed, flogged, and "scalped" those who intermarried with members of other tribes (389–90). And Brereton writes,

Our God a holy Jealousy avows,
And of no Creature rival Love allows:
If ought on Earth too ardently we prize,
The much-lov'd Blessings vanish from our Eyes.
(201)

Parental love is characterized as "Illusive Views! And Expectations vain! / Strait Disappointment and the ghastly Train / Of Life-eroding Grief, and baneful Care" (201). The poem finally moves to a consolation in "our sure Hope" ("There God shall wipe all Sorrow from our Eyes; / There thou shall't meet thy much lamented Son") and the exhortation to "Submit with Rev'rence" (202). This poem combines the personal, immediate effects of Brereton's best friendship poems with the technical force and elevation of the best of the distinctively English elegies. The meeting point between feminine forms and practices and mainstream, public poetry here, as in many poems by women, produces powerful poetry and enriches both traditions.

Brereton began developing performative voices as a way of incorporating antagonistic points of view, and in the *Epistle to Mrs. Anne Griffiths. Written from London, in 1718* she inserts the imagined voice of a "snarling, surly" critic who would "storm and fume" if he saw her poetry. This "surly"—rude—man is the personification of the prejudiced critic that women poets often chastised, ridiculed, or lamented. Brereton's says,

How dares this silly Woman thus presume,
In her crude injudicious Lines to name
Those ancient Poets of immortal Fame?
The Women, now forsooth! are Authors grown,
And write such Stuff our Sex would blush to own!
(33)

To this attack, Brereton replies disarmingly,

That I am dull, is what I own and know;
But why I may'nt be privileg'd to shew
That Dullness to a private Friend or two,
(As to the World Male Writers often do)
I can't conceive: . . .
(34)

Brereton takes the same tone and strategy that Finch had when she asked facetiously in *The Appology* why she could not heat her brain by writing poetry rather than with a "manly Bumper." Immediately, however, Brereton goes on the attack by constructing a female poetic canon, one she treats with balance and judiciousness:

> Fair Modesty was once our Sex's Pride,
> But some have thrown that bashful Grace aside:
> The *Behns*, the *Manleys* head this motley Train,
> Politely lewd and wittily prophane;
> Their Wit, their fluent Style (which all must own)
> Can never for their Levity atone:
> But Heaven that still its Goodness to denote,
> For every Poison gives an Antidote;
> First our *Orinda*, spotless in her Fame,
> As chaste in Wit, rescu'd our Sex from Shame:
> And now, when *Heywood*'s soft seducing Style
> Might heedless Youth and Innocence Beguile,
> Angelic Wit, and purest Thoughts agree,
> In tuneful *Singer*; and great *Winchelsea*.
>
> For me, who never durst to more pretend
> Than to amuse myself, and please my Friend;
> If she approves of my unskilful Lays;
> I dread no Critic, and desire no Praise.
>
> (34–35)

These lines set up the two lines of women writers, one "shameless" sluts and one chaste ladies, but they also dare to recognize poetic merit. Both Behn and Manley definitely had wit and "fluent Style,"[158] and Eliza Haywood, who had not yet published *Love in Excess*, her first amatory fiction, could be praised for "soft seducing Style." Tellingly, Brereton does not praise Philips's poetic talent but rightly labels Singer (Rowe) "tuneful" and Finch "great." Where she had encountered Haywood's poetry is an intriguing question; since both women were in London, it is possible that she had even read a prepublication copy of *Love in Excess*. The reference is clearly to poetic style, however, and reflects her more conservative view of the proper subjects of poetry.[159] Brereton's description of her poetry is too modest, but there is no question but that she lacked Finch's and

Montagu's drive for experimentation in a large number of forms. Although this kind of statement cannot be taken as unmediated truth, she consistently refers to writing as amusement, and her poetry makes clear her embrace of accomplishment and decorum. In *The Dream*, for instance, she has the eagle say, "Thy Book and Needle can't delight, / From eight at Morn, 'till nine at Night. / T' amuse Thee now my Care must be" (139). Nevertheless, she left a substantial body of poetry deserving closer study. Rowe achieved excellence by specializing in religious poetry, and Brereton did the same with the friendship poem.

Adaptation and Ideology

From Philips forward, women poets had joined in the culture's ideological negotiations that transformed value systems into ideologies. Especially public-sphere topics concerned with appropriate class and gender conduct found their way into friendship poems. For instance, the growth of materialism, the effects of England's global economy, and indulgence in "luxury" are as much a part of the cultural history of Great Britain as are the friendship poems that inscribe the "woman questions." The familiar poems contrasting the city with the country are good examples. Philips contrasts the "noise of Towns" and vice, vanity, and fate with country retirement in scattered lines (Philips, 103), but for Finch it is a major theme that foreshadows the vast literature condemning women's fashionable, city pastimes. Finch also recognizes these contrasting value systems that are beginning to divide her country. *Ardelia's Answer to Ephelia* is subtitled *who had invited her to come to her in town — reflecting on the Coquetterie and detracting humour of the Age.* It is actually a dialogue, part "spoken" and part internal. First Ardelia gives her reactions to the day in the city, and then Ephelia does; both comment on Almeria, who "discerns all failings, but her own." The values that Finch affirms are broad. Religion, dress, literature, and especially the use of time come in for discussion. Ephelia complains that Ardelia "plainly sais, / That sence and Nature shou'd be found in Plays" and prefers Dryden, Etheredge, Lee, "And some few Authors, old, and dull to me" (Reynolds, 41). A section on the contributions to literature by Piso (Lord Roscommon) also suggests the growing preference for spectacle and novelty as opposed to neoclassical values.

Ardelia is clearly conservative and old-fashioned in the manner of Swift's Count Munodi in *Gulliver's Travels*, and she sees the imbrication of aesthetics and politics and the shifting balances regarding use and exchange value. For instance, Ardelia enjoys good tea and does not notice the cup. Ephelia, however, who

represents the new competitive consumerism, has forced bargemen to brave a storm to get her to a ship for first choice of the imported china. The cups, not the tea, matter to her. Ardelia attends church, reads, and rather than going from shop to shop searching for rare finds and bargains deals with a single, trusted supplier. Mary Jones's Elviar in *Of Desire. An Epistle to the Hon. Miss Lovelace* also has a passion for china. "Fresh cargoes come, fresh longings these create," Jones, writing a generation later, observes shrewdly. Jones's twelve lines are the satiric rise-fall that Pope constructs with a histrionic, comic ending: "For what is life, now all my China's broke!" our heroine exclaims.

Noting another shift, Finch has Ardelia say, "Hauing of other cares, enough beside; / And in a cheap, or an ill chosen gown, / Can vallue blood that's nobler then my own" (Reynolds, 41). This respect for lineage as opposed to money, possessions, and fashionable appearance that could "a Title buye" would be an increasingly contentious dividing line between classes, political parties, and individuals for decades. Addison had tried to smooth over it in the *Spectator*, but in fact in essays that presented women as spaces to be decorated with the wealth of their husbands and fathers and then displayed, he was reinforcing imperialism and commerce. Finch, like the men in her generation, sometimes fought shifts in the dominant ideology with satire. She writes of the "hope, my self not to be weigh'd / By gold, or silver, on my garments laid" and portrays a society of people competing desperately for recognition, for visibility, for separation from an amorphous crowd.

In *Adam Pos'd* she strikes again at this new value system based on the exterior and material objects, which casts women such as herself in the shadows. Adam stares incredulously at a fashionable woman and is "pos'd," unable to think of a name for her, although he had named all the other creatures (Reynolds, 149). By the time Mary Savage wrote *Letter to my Friend E.B.*, full-blown ideological differences were sharp. She complains that wit and vivacity now "constitute merit," and there is no mention of lineage, which obviously no longer matters to social arbiters. One of the poets most comfortable writing satire, Savage strikes at the major difference that Finch sensed:

> You remember (no doubt) the dear joys of fifteen,
> How you flaunted, and dressed, and lov'd to be seen;
> Oh! had you been taught, as you ought to have been;
> You still might have flaunted, and past for fifteen;
> For among the gay world, we never are told,
> Of a male or a female that ever grows old.

No doubt they some method have hit on at last
To keep father time from trotting so fast;
Or else to the mill, they in private retire,
There they throw off their years — as we our attire
. . . . . .
Dear heart; ——
—— How I sigh, when I think of these things;
How oft have we thought that riches had wings;
That time gallop'd fast and for no one would stay,
And that death was a debt, we must certainly pay.

What a pity it is, we were not better bred,
And such strange musty notions, beat out of our head;
For now I'm afraid, 'tis too late in the day,
'Twill surpass our best skill, to drive them away.[160]

City life had come to contradict not only sense but sensory observation, and Savage ridicules the triumph of a secular society that alarmed so many eighteenth-century people. She counters it with the image of the sensible woman who knows "That not only expence, but the loss of our time, / Makes pursuit, of diversions, so often a crime" (1:21).

Savage invokes "merit" instead of "rank," and she is one of the many women who recognizes the shifting values placed on lineage, kinship, talent, accomplishment, manners, education, and virtue. The popularity of verbal duels between women as in *The Rival Queens* and Dryden's *All for Love* testifies to the interest competing value systems held at that time, and the same sort of struggle for a stable hierarchy animates these poems and often gives access to individual women's painful experiences or attempts to conform or resist. Susan Lanser notes that virtue, talent, education, and accomplishment "underwrote a system" that replaced rank and established the class identity, "accomplishments," and dominance of the gentry, the upper middle class, and the lesser nobility.[161] Rank had regulated sexual, political, and economic life, but the establishment of an economics largely separable from the domestic market overthrew the centrality of kinship. Before the end of the century gender would displace kinship, fine gradients of class, and education as status divides,[162] and virtue, accomplishment, and decorum — gentility — would be the measures of women.

Many friendship poems written in Savage's lifetime and for the rest of the century were part of the inexorable movement that established gentility as the

primary cultural value. Women of course contributed to the triumph of the gentry and gentility. Brereton's *Decorum: or the Female Debate. Written in the Year 1739, at the Desire of a Friend*, an early lesson about gentility, is a good inquiry into contemporary structures of feeling. By 1700 the polarizing of society into three groups—an increasingly criticized nobility and aristocracy, the middle class, and "the lower orders"—had begun in earnest. By the time Brereton wrote this poem, an "established sense of class identity, based upon a set of distinct cultural and intellectual assumptions" and practices was inevitable and becoming obvious.[163] As the middle class marked themselves off from the corrupt aristocrats and from the tasteless masses, they also created new rigid, dividing tests. Brereton's poem is one of hundreds of examples of what we can now identify as the shared project of establishing and demonstrating appropriate class and gender behavior. She writes in perfectly decorous couplets:

> Beyond the fix'd and settl'd Rules
> Of Vice and Virtue in the Schools;
> Beyond the Letter of the Law,
> Which keeps our Men and Maids in Awe,
> The better Sort should set before 'em
> A Grace, a Manner, a Decorum,
> Something that gives their Acts a Light,
> Makes 'em not only just, but bright;
> And set 'em in that open Fame,
> Which witty Malice cannot blame.
> Thus Prior sung—
>
> (203–4)

Celia counters, "Formality is out of Fashion; / And what's Decorum? —but the same?" (204). Myra attempts to define decorum. She describes it, alludes to the classical definition from *Tully's Offices*,[164] and illustrates the impression it makes on "rustics" at a mixed gathering of people. In colloquial English, one rustic observes as they walk home, ". . . d'ye mind [note] how these, / At once, can both instruct, and please" (207).

The central argument is that decorum sets virtue off, making it shine like a diamond in a good setting: "Thus, in Decorum, Virtue shines, / And e'en th' untutored Mind refines!" (208). Thalestris, named for the queen of the Amazons, reacts with scorn and sneers at Celia, calling decorum "peevish Prudery," "censorious," and "ill-nature." Thalestris offers a story to balance Celia's of the

gathering; in hers "the courtly Florio" chooses to marry "the kindest Belle," one whose "Honour had a Flaw." This didactic poem has two conclusions. The first shows Thalestris, the representative of the modern point of view, carrying the day:

> What learn we now from this Debate?
> —That Vice will have its Advocate.
> That Florio, polish'd Florio! chose
> The Weed, before the sweetest Rose.
> That Prudence which, in Heathern Time,
> Was own'd a Virtue most sublime;
> That Honour, and each moral Grace,
> Now pass for Prudery, Pride, Grimace.
> To shun a wild, unworthy Creature,
> Is Spleen, Ill-manners, and Ill-nature.
>
> (212)

The sarcasm toward Florio and the strongly stated irony of these lines are followed by the second ending, which simply offers a counterexample: Queen Caroline and her four daughters. Using gender and royalty to sneer—although genteelly—at Thalestris, the poet concludes, "Their great Example shall prevail, / When Argument, and Precept fail" (213).

This poem gives us insight into cultural change. The clashing codes of behavior that Brereton cleverly represents show the fashionable labeling Celia's argument as a residual structure of feeling, when in fact, as Brereton's conclusion promises, it was emergent. The old-fashioned morality and prudery would become "gentility," the mark of the hegemonic middle class that would sweep all before it.

By the time Ann Murry wrote *City Splendor: A Town Eclogue* the battle lines were more clearly drawn and class climbing was an object of satire—satire aimed squarely at values. A couple fantasize about what they will do when Mr. Wealthy is elected Lord Mayor. Mrs. Wealthy, who has been "compelled" to marry a rich tradesman, when she hoped her beauty would buy her "an Earl or Beau," scoffs at her husband's solid business values: "Your Day-Book and your Ledger seem, / To be your most engaging theme. / . . . / Boasting your debts are punctual paid." She objects to his plans for "An English welcome, rough and hearty" and wants gentility, carefully tailored clothes, and "people of the first degree." In the end, however, Mr. Wealthy is just as much a creature of his time as she. He intends to

buy more land in the fashionable suburb of Newington and "then will be a man of pleasure; / Build and rebuild, plant and lay waste." Throughout England the planting and tearing out, building and rebuilding, was a passion of the gentry, and it was beginning to have an adverse effect on farming and even the market towns.[165] Frequently contrasted to careful management of productive land, making "improvements" was controversial, and Murry condemns and punishes with "lay waste." Some saw it as largely frivolous, while others associated it with creating a contented, retired life.[166] Murry, the well-educated daughter of a London wine merchant, became a tutor and rose to the position of preceptress in the royal nursery. Her experiences, observant eye, and willingness to write social critique had already been established in her popular *Mentoria* (1778). Reviewers praised her lively, colloquial pieces and sensible moral values,[167] as demonstrated in *City Splendor*.

Gerald MacLean has reminded us that a literary text is "not so much a closed formal unit but more an expression of life as it is being lived in a particular place, at a particular time, according to a particular structure of feeling governed, in the final instance, by the general mode of production."[168] An analogy can be drawn between the political poems that MacLean is discussing and women's friendship poems. Initially both were circulated in manuscript and tended to be primarily subversive interventions. When the mode of production shifted to print and these poems were written for or entered the official print culture, they become "subject to different forms of entropic interference."[169]

Nancy Fraser points out that even subaltern public spheres are places "for the formation and enactment of *social* identities" (emphasis mine).[170] The generation of poets writing in the last fifteen years of the century retained the role of virtuous, charitable neighbors but increasingly added "patriot" and public critic. As we have seen, friendship poems had become important places for personal expression, places where subjectivity and agency developed, and upon that foundation women poets increasingly exercised a social and ethical awareness, as Murry did. The poets of Anna Seward's generation took assertive steps into the public sphere and provided support for one another. Helen Maria Williams dedicated one of her major long poems, *Peru*, to Elizabeth Montagu; in *An Ode on the Peace* she devoted a verse to Montagu ("Where eloquence and wit entwine") and paid tribute to Seward's *Monody on the unfortunate Major André*, a poem about the hanging of a British spy by the Americans. Williams's *Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave Trade* (1788) helped inspire poems by Hannah More and Ann Yearsley.

These poems sustain the imagery, language, settings, and addresses of earlier poems, but with new purposes. One of Seward's friendship poems turns a double feast into an insightful, satiric look at several political events. Her *Verses inviting Mrs. C—— to Tea on a public Fast-Day, during the American War* hones in on hypocrisy and unacknowledged bloodthirstiness and jingoism:

> Dear Stella, 'mid the pious sorrow
> Our monarch bids us feel to-morrow,
> The ahs! and ohs! supremely triste,
> The abstinence from beef, and whist;
> Wisely ordain'd to please the Lord,
> And force him whet our edgeless sword,
> Till, shipping o'er the Atlantic rill,
> We cut provincial throats at will;
> 'Midst all the penitence we feel
> For merry sins, — 'midst all the zeal
> For vengeance on the saucy foe,
> Who lays our boasted legions low;
> I wish, when sullen evening comes,
> That you, to gild its falling glooms,
> Would, without scruple cold, agree
> Beneath these walls to sip your tea.
>
> (Scott, 2:55)

Acidly noting that the monarch bids *them* feel penitence, she picks up the attitude many British felt toward the Americans — that they were saucy. Incidentally, she joins the women writers of religious poetry in critiquing the patriarchy's relationship to God in the line, "And force him [God] whet our edgeless sword." The first half of the poem is a private invitation with publicly unacceptable sentiments — seditious and perhaps blasphemous as well. The second half of the poem is in the voice of "a Patriot," who chides her for the sauciness of drinking tea, "the cruel source / Of sad distrust, and long divorce / 'Twixt nations." Remember, the Patriot says, the Boston Tea Party:

> When Boston, with indignant thought,
> Saw poison in the perfum'd draught,
> And caus'd her troubled bay to be
> But one vast bowl of bitter Tea;

> While Ate, chiefly bidden guest,
> Came sternly to the fatal feast,
> And mingled with its baneful flood
> Brother's! — Children's! — Parent's blood.
>
> (2:57)

She juxtaposes two feasts, the Boston Tea Party with Ate, goddess of vengeance, as guest (2:57n), and hers with Stella, where she plans to eat sparingly but "gluttonize on Stella's wit." The delightful friendship between women stands in stark contrast to the murderous rage between brothers. Tea for the women is "chaste, fragrant, Indian weed," but for the men it is "drug," "Indian shrub," and compared to the laurel water that Captain Donnellan used to murder Sir Theodosius Boughton. Seward thus juxtaposes the public, international event with a private but sensationally publicized murder case. John Donnellan, master of ceremonies at the Pantheon, on Oxford Street, London, was, in the words of one journalist, "almost universally known." He was convicted of murdering his twenty-year-old brother-in-law, Sir Theodosius Boughton, by spiking his medication with laurel leaves, "the most fatal and expeditious of all poisons."[171] Donnellan was executed on 2 April 1781. The war in America was not going well. The British had lost a decisive battle at Cowpens, South Carolina, on 17 January 1781 and suffered huge losses at the battle of Guilford Courthouse, North Carolina; the French had sent reinforcements to the Americans; and the British would be decisively defeated at Yorktown in October. The Boston Tea Party, on 16 December 1773, was the symbolic proclamation of war on both sides. One of the most unexpected pleasures of friendship poems is the acute, personal observations on public events and people and critiques of masculine thinking embedded in what appear to be private poems. The friendship poem here is pretext, the strategy that protects Seward from charges of moving outside acceptable conduct, yet it is an important poem in establishing her as a daring commentator on current events. Like Seward, these late-century poets sometimes transmit the distinctive voices and conversations of women quite vividly, thereby simultaneously portraying their counteruniverse and making it clear that women have and express political opinion.

Women's self-representations can be powerful cultural critique. The unselfconscious rendering of intelligent, thinking women who have agency and authority *as women* in friendship poems is especially valuable evidence because so many of the poems were written to people who already knew them intimately. Margaret

Doody says confidently that the "literature of friendship is also a literature of individualism."[172] Sylvia Myers contends that Jemima Campbell "recognized that [a] friendship had really meant an asserting of individuality, when she said she was glad such a friendship *could* be formed outside the confines of a 'narrow family circle,' and that 'Minds are free to choose their own associates.' "[173] The states of mind created foster the development not only of autonomous selves within women's situation in a patriarchal culture but also of distinctive styles. Therefore, they are life-writing, social history, and part of the history of changing language and style in poetry. One of the most intriguing aspects of these poems is the way they lay bare how often women were interpellated as "woman" and how often they were not answering. To play on Althusser's formulation, rather than waving a hand of acknowledgment, they waved away many of their culture's hailings and, in the friendship poems, created and enthusiastically answered contrasting ones.

Poetry has been especially good at setting perimeters, thereby restricting and controlling representation and even subjects that can be represented. It traditionally determines that women will be objects, that gender will be controlled or excluded, and that the authoritative, speaking voice will be male. The authors of friendship poems, however, set themselves up as different kinds of authorities. Awareness of their sex provided these poets with themes and subjects. Arbiters of relationships and experts on their counteruniverse, they display all of the characteristics of authority that Susan Lanser posited as necessary "to establish alternate 'worlds' and the 'maxims' by which they will operate, to construct and publicly represent female subjectivity and redefine the 'feminine,' and to constitute as a discursive subject a female body politic."[174] Women poets did the first and second early and by the end of the century had created social selves that ranged from the healer and consoler to the political citizen as freely as they revealed individual voices and interiorized identities. Friendship poems are not just about female-female relationships; they are about everything women cared about—their situations, their relationships, and mores shaping their countrymen's lives.

The friendship poem became a powerful subject position.[175] Therefore, the space became a place for identity formation and even for recovering suppressed dimensions of the self. An inevitable result was that it was a space for bringing to broad consciousness experiences, feelings, and issues not usually in common discussion. For example, in a birthday poem, *Thirty-Eight. To Mrs. H——y* (1791), Charlotte Smith describes the greater joys and quiet confidence that

comes "With firmer souls and stronger powers, / With reason, faith, and friendship ours." This poem, like so many, celebrates women's personal achievements, be they in the arts or in the art of living. By this time in the century Smith could draw upon a collective voice, a definable community of poems "textually inscribed through multiple, mutually authorizing voices or individuals" who had come to be authorized by the women's community.[176] As Germaine Greer says, "Female collectivity makes possible a more poised and understated writing, a subtler and more complex manipulation of tone, the raising of the voice of female sanity."[177]

If this writing world and its space were somewhat isolated and a means of gaining "a degree of autonomy at the cost of accepting the terms of the argument set by the dominant group,"[178] the discursive space was expanded, and the friendship poem flowered into a distinctly female form of great usefulness and flexibility. Mary Darwall wrote, "I never studiously ranged thro' the Regions of Imagination to seek for Paths unexplored by former Writers; but sat down content to employ my humble Abilities on such Themes — as Friendship, Gratitude, and native Freedom of Fancy."[179] Margaret Doody argues that the reference to Anne Tufton, Lady Salisbury, in Finch's *Nocturnal Reverie* "complicates" and "refocuses everything."[180] She explains what happens to space and how the poem is wrenched free of male categories by, for instance, depicting nature as neither sublime nor beautiful. I would say that Finch transforms the poem into a friendship poem and thereby overruns the guards that traditionally police the boundaries of poetry and its genres.[181] The next chapters, although about other major poetic forms, occasionally point out how major settings, strategies, and themes from the friendship poems inflect some poems in both elevated and lower forms. For example, the friendship poem deepened the bite of gritty poems of common life[182] and, as we shall see in the next chapter, added new themes and dimensions to the respected retirement poem.

CHAPTER SIX

Retirement Poetry

> A spirit conscious of superior worth,
> In placid elevation firmly great
> — CHARLOTTE SMITH

The poetry of the mid-eighteenth century is often characterized as poetry of retreat—from politics, from cities, from social engagement. Evening becomes the preferred time of day, and melancholy the mood. As Raymond Williams noted, "There is a use of the country, of 'nature,' as a retreat and solace from human society and ordinary human consciousness."[1] John Sitter goes further in his influential *Literary Loneliness in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England* and finds a determined retreat from history in all of its manifestations. The "consciousness" and perspective of these poets, he argues, is of "solitary writers for solitary readers" ("literary loneliness").[2] Women's friendship poems always had an element of retreat. In their private, intimate spaces, however, women usually had a companion, laughter was more common than gloom, and a distinct portrait of "ordinary human consciousness" emerged vividly. In this chapter I follow the friendship poem into the poetry of retreat. Rosalie Colie explains that families of literary works are "tiny sub-cultures with their own habits, habitats, and structures of ideas as their forms," which "melt into one another."[3] Alastair Fowler argues that Andrew Marvell "adumbrates" eighteenth-century retirement poetry by com-

bining "the local descriptive and estate poems with the retirement poem of Saint-Amant and Sarbiewski." By drawing from each kind's "repertoires," "the whole range of potential points of resemblance that a genre may exhibit," Marvell's poems foreshadow the "repertoire" of the next century's retirement poem, states Fowler,[4] and women's retirement poetry anticipates the path that serious nature poetry took. As might be expected, women and men often choose different literary kinds to "melt" into their retirement poems, and gender contrasts are especially evident in this chapter. Mary, Lady Chudleigh, Elizabeth Carter, Mary Whateley Darwall, Sarah Dixon, and Hester Mulso Chapone are the major representatives of women's distinctive work in this literary kind.

Beyond Convention

Beautiful retirement poetry has distinguished English literature almost from the beginning, and its imagery, tone, and frequent claim to aesthetic appreciation and metaphysical insight have assured its respect. The disillusioned poets of the Restoration contributed significantly to the history of the retirement poem. Few poems are as technically masterful and personally moving as John Dryden's *To my Cousin John Driden* and the opening verses of Aphra Behn's *A Congratulatory Poem to Her Sacred Majesty Queen Mary, Upon her Arrival in England.* Milton's *Il Penseroso* and *L'Allegro*, Vaughan's two poems titled *Retirement*, Marvell's *The Garden* and *Upon Appleton House*, Charles Cotton's *Retirement*, and translations of Horace's second epode and Virgil's "happy husbandman" in the second book of the *Georgics* provided a legacy for eighteenth-century poets.[5] Milton's *Il Penseroso* and William Habington's *Castara* made the motif of solitary contemplation an important and indispensable element.[6] These poems had much to offer women because they often represented a person without political or public power, even an exile from decision making, and they portrayed (or insisted upon with bravado) a hard-won, deeply virtuous, self-sufficient contentment.

Anne Finch wrote her share, and the ending of *An Invitation to Dafnis* is a fine example of her exquisitely rendered, understated art:

> As Baucis and Philemon spent their lives,
> Of husbands he, the happyest she, of wives,
> When throo' the painted meads, their way they sought,
> Harmlesse in act, and unperplext in thought,

> Lett us my Dafnis, rural joys persue,
> And Courts, or Camps, not ev'n in fancy view.
> So, lett us throo' the Groves, my Dafnis stray,
> And so, the pleasures of the feilds, survey.
>
> (Reynolds, 30)

Throughout the poem Ardelia has been pulling him away from cares, from thoughts of Mons and Namur (French battle sites), from compasses (used for both mathematical study and calculating the movement of armies), and from the Sansons' *Description de tout l'univers*. With images that come together in this last verse, the two of them, just for a time, take on the identity of Baucis and Philemon, the Ovidian cottagers who entertained Jupiter and, when he offered to grant them a request, asked that they might die together and live "Harmless in act, and unperplext in thought."

In the middle decades of the century nature poetry was ubiquitous, and its diverse heritages, themes, and forms flowed into the established retirement poem. Many of these poems are the heirs or relatives of the georgic, possibly the century's most flexible and influential form.[7] Dryden's beautiful translations with Addison's prefatory "Essay on the Georgics" (1697),[8] Addison's other critical statements in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, and Pope's creative adaptation *Windsor Forest* gave the georgic status as well as new flexibility. As John Goodridge has said, Addison "prophetically delineated those characteristics . . . which would ensure its appeal." Specifically, Addison noted that the *Georgics* were written in the middle style, were digressive, accommodated other poetic forms, and gave "plain and direct instruction to the reader." Above all, the form combined pleasure, with its "variety of scenes and landscapes," and instruction; practical and moral didacticism.[9] The voluminous notes to John Martyn's edition of the *Georgics* (1741) are designed to prove that Virgil was still a valuable source of scientific information. Women drew very selectively from the georgic legacy, and some of the contrasts to what seems to have been useful to men reveal both creative adaptations to women's situation and critiques of public policy.

In addition, the picturesque, the philosophical, the wish, and the country-house poem, all heirs of classical expressions about nature and retirement, began to include more individual responses to the physical world. Critics such as Myra Reynolds recognized that later in the century there was "a real and vital love for the out-door world, and . . . this new attitude toward Nature is marked by first-

hand observation, by artistic sensitiveness to beauty, by personal enthusiasm for Nature, by a recognition of the effect of Nature on man . . ."[10] Descriptions of places and buildings were both emblematic and personally meaningful. Most retirement poems of the midcentury displayed aesthetic and personal enjoyment of the outdoors and emphasized the pleasures, repose, and moral efficacies of retirement, but they did not often aim for extended, distinctively observational descriptions of nature. Even in poems with brief, evocative scenes, as Charles Peake says, "the natural scene is firmly subordinated to the moral or spiritual argument," as it is in Thomas Parnell's *Night-piece on Death* (1722), or tends to be decorative rather than inseparable from the argument, as most are in Pope's *Windsor Forest* (1713).[11] Although poets often reflect on the nature of human life and its vicissitudes, as a group they cannot be identified with a striving toward extended descriptions and philosophical statements, as Thomson does in *The Seasons* and as the Romantic poets would do.

By 1777 John Aikin could begin his influential *Essay on the Application of Natural Description to Poetry* by reminding his readers that "no literary complaint is more frequent and general than that of the insipidity of Modern Poetry," and he blames "a perpetual repetition of the same images, clad in almost the same language."[12] He could have gone further and noted formulaic structures and predictable set pieces within the poems. Many such retirement poems were written by women, and they share the tritest of scenes and language patterns with poems by men. Mary Chandler writes in *To Mrs. Jacob On her Seat called The Rocks, in Gloucestershire*,

> At easy distance from the town,
> An hospitable seat,
> From crowd and noise there stands retir'd,
> A sweet and cool retreat.
>
> (Fullard, 199)

Chandler, a "deformed" proprietor of a millenary shop in Bath, was frequently invited to visit country homes, and she beautifully captures the idea of the countryside as an "imaginary, generalized space" of leisure, gentility, and sociability.[13] The contrast between city and country, the quiet, welcoming, even old-fashioned image of human relationships, is comforting partly because of its traditional setting near "silver streams," "fruitful valleys," and "tow'ring elms." Mary Darwall in *Rural Happiness* produces a slightly more elevated but equally conventional scene:

Now beauteous Autumn glads the yellow Plains,
And bright-ey'd *Ceres* crown'd with Plenty reigns;
With blushing Fruit the bending Branches shine,
And rip'ning Clusters load the gen'rous Vine.[14]

Chandler's poem, written in simple tetrameter quatrains, ends with an image of pure but homely pleasure: "There beauty, goodness, friendship smiles, / And gen'rous plenty flows." The hostess and her retreat are emblems of the "genius of the place" (Fullard, 200). Darwall's poem rises to a conventional, classical "happy man" conclusion that begins, "Happy the Man! who from the noisy Town / Retiring, finds this sweet Recess his own."[15] Darwall's final portrait includes two references to friendship:

Let *Friendship*'s gen'rous Warmth expand my Breast,
And sweet *Contentment* be my constant Guest;
Let social Converse crown the Day's Decline.
(32–33)

Friendship and social converse are contrasted to contemplation, and the evening, rather than a time for reflective retreat, is a time for general gatherings.

Equally conventional is Catherine Rebecca Manners's *On Returning to Lebena in May 1788*.[16] The second verse begins, "O Solitude! of mind serene, / Parent of Innocence and Peace, / Preside for ever o'er this scene," and the poem concludes, "Accept then, Solitude, my prayer, / A wearied wanderer receive; / Strenthen'd by thee, I will prepare / By spotless virtue for the grave." Within this frame she narrates the sights she sees and the temptations she encounters. These descriptions are well done but utterly conventional. "Nobles, who were wont to raise to Liberty a spotless shrine" are now devoted to Avarice. A Beauty, "robb'd of every boasted grace" now "decks with borrow'd bloom her face"; she is tempted in "one thoughtless hour," but Reason saves her. The movement in many of the nature poems is exactly this—from the city to a retreat to nature, to an appeal to Reason, then to a vow of "absolute virtue," finally to a religious vision of death. David Morris affirms a widely recognized truth, one that twentieth-century criticism often tried to ignore or somehow skirt: "Nature in the eighteenth century holds an inseparable connection with religion and with religious feeling, so that the desire for nature is often inseparable from a desire for God."[17] Louis Martz demonstrates that meditative poems of the period parallel the forms of religious meditation practiced and written about in that time.[18] Parnell's *Hymn on Content-*

ment (1714) is typical in its movement to a promise to celebrate natural beauty and the "great SOURCE OF NATURE," and his *Night-piece on Death* (1722) begins with the persona seeking outdoor, evening meditation, "a readier path" than books to wisdom, and concludes with a voice explaining the release and joy of death, "As men who long in prison dwell, / . . . / Spring forth . . . / . . . / And mingle with the blaze of day."[19]

As Martz says, there was a strong tradition of beginning meditative poems with a vivid "composition," and quotations from the scriptures drew the temporal and spiritual worlds into one mystical, or sublime, sphere. This tradition did not fade away. Thomson echoes Psalm 145 in *Summer* and appends *Hymn to the Seasons*. The modern editor of *The Seasons*, James Sambrook, concludes that the "finished work of 1746 remains, in intention, a religious didactic poem."[20] Women's religious poetry could be combined with or constructed to slide smoothly into traditional moods and expressions of retirement poetry. Ann Messenger contends that entire retirement poems, such as Finch's *Petition for an Absolute Retreat*, are in the form of prayers and that the prayer is an important form of women's retirement poetry.[21] In a beautiful and original poem, *Solitude*, Laetitia Pilkington sets the time and scene, addresses Solitude, and then prays to the Virgin Mary:

> Hail, Heav'n-born Virgin! deign to bless,
> This sacred, silent, sweet Recess;
> Give me, celestial Maid, to know
> The Joys that from thy Presence flow;
> Do thou instruct my Voice to sing
> That God from whom thou first did'st spring.
> . . . . . .
> Then when the Morning Stars proclaim
> The Glory of *Jehovah's* Name,
> When Praises ev'ry Tongue employ,
> And Men and Angels shout for Joy,
> Assist me with thy Aid divine,
> In those blest Hymns my Voice to join.
>
> (Tucker, 56)

The simplicity of this poem and its conventional language obscure the originality of casting Mary as the friend in the "peaceful cool Retreat" and as the appropriate Muse to inspire the kind of song to which Pilkington aspires. Both Darwall's and Manners's poems end with wishes that sound very much like prayers, and such endings compete with religious revelation, sometimes sublime, in frequency.

Alongside these fashionable and conventional nature and retreat poems is a strain of original women's retirement verse. Women intensify, break with, or revise almost every defining characteristic of midcentury retirement poetry and raise anew the question of who identifies conventions and defines the perimeters and *architectonike* of a literary kind.[22] Both Philips and Finch had illustrated the possibility of a space of autonomy for themselves and a female friend; this space was almost always retired and always primarily in the mind. The retirement poem, because it was about the mind, imagination, and observed natural surroundings, at this time was less gendered and less restrictive than the pastoral, and women increasingly turned to experimenting with it. Over time, in women's hands the retirement poem changed without losing the capacity for beauty and profundity that poets such as John Dryden had given it. Women adapted it to include celebrations of friendship and expressions of a more private, individualized sensibility.

Finch's great *Nocturnal Reverie* is a crucial part of the evolution of this form. It has conventional citations of "gentle Zephyr" and word patterns such as "Tyrant-man" and "cool Banks to pleasing rest invite," yet the specific evocation of genuinely experienced and loved rural detail that would distinguish Thomas Gray's *Elegy in a Country Church-Yard* and Robert Burns's *Cotter's Saturday Night* predominates.[23] The lines "When the loos'd *Horse* now, as his Pasture leads / Comes slowly grazing thro' th' adjoining Meads" introduce a series of finely rendered night sounds, such as the partridge's calls "to her straggling Brood." The poem moves from a very conventional opening, setting the time and the scene, to what can be seen, then to sounds, and finally, as they too die away, to the effect on the mind. Remarkably, the poem is a single sentence, thereby mirroring both the beautifully linked movement of mind and senses and the magic of the night and a life suspended in its beauty. Ironically, its alliance with friendship poems and the beauty of its structure become more obvious when Wordsworth's strange cuts are studied. Wordsworth omitted both the transition from sight to sound ("When scatter'd Glow-worms . . .") and a personal tribute to the daughter of a friend, which is a harbinger of the conclusion's state of mind that allies the poem with the women poets' blending of retirement and friendship themes. Finch avoids trite images of the moon by describing it reflected: "When in some River, overhung with Green, / The waving Moon and trembling leaves are seen. . . ." Her conclusion suggests why the Romantics so admired her, as she produces lines characteristic of Keats: "But silent Musings urge the Mind to seek / Something, too high for Syllables to speak." This dignified poem in heroic couplets as beautiful and polished as the quoted lines; her *Petition for an Absolute Retreat*, in octosyl-

lables; and *The Spleen*, a Pindaric ode, are her best-known poems, and all celebrate retirement. Either implicitly or explicitly in these poems and others, she acknowledges the *weight* of poetic tradition and fashion even as she creates poetry that is a powerful vehicle of identity formation and assertion.

Mary Chudleigh contributed to the evolution of this defining characteristic of eighteenth-century retirement poetry by men and women. Chudleigh may be known today, if she is known at all, for one protest poem, *To the Ladies*, with its unforgettable opening lines.[24] "Wife and servant are the same, / But only differ in the name," she wrote and gained immortality. However, as true to a grasp of her work as this poem is, her retirement poems are more important to literary history. Marilyn Williamson, a sensitive reader of Chudleigh's poetry, singles out as her major achievement contributions to the strain of women's poetry that seeks a retreat that will allow a woman to be "free to be herself—intellectual, self-sufficient, contemplative."[25] Chudleigh's pleasures and desires are freely expressed, as in the central verse of *To Clorissa:*

> When all alone in some belov'd Retreat,
> . . . . . .
> 'Tis then I tast the most delicious Feast of Life:
> There, uncontroul'd I can my self survey,
> And from Observers free,
> My intellectual Pow'rs display,
> And all th' opening Scenes of beauteous Nature see.
> (Ezell, 68)

The unapologetic "my self survey" and "My intellectual Pow'rs display" went beyond Finch's reflections on her selfhood, but both women made the retirement poem about the self and about the recognition of an autonomous identity. This freedom begins in the permitted or snatched time of personal self-indulgence, the time for thought and reflection. Retirement poetry was created to provide the space that is by definition the expression of the self, and members of each generation and sex found that it answered their needs. In these poems by women what the world has written onto the woman can be admitted and accepted, resisted, escaped from, and treated with a rich variety of responses. Chudleigh's poems foreground this use of poetry.

Finch's poetry makes clear that times of retired contemplation in beautiful natural settings were as essential to her as air, water, and food and a defining part of her identity. Sometimes women of the next generation express the same ideas. Using the Miltonic periodic sentence, Sarah Dixon writes,

No Wretch, who long by Tempests tost,
Survives the Fright and gains the Coast,
Where Plenty, Peace, and darling *Friends*,
And every happy Wish attends,
Can feel Delight that's more sincere
Than what my *Soul* possesses here.[26]

In the context of her other poems that have contrasted her "ruffled Soul" to her state of mind in retirement, this poem seems no exaggeration but a vivid statement of how she feels when free to fly to her "silent soft Retreat." Imagining a state of mind, she metaphorically communicates longing, delayed and uncertain gratification, and even a touch of desperation. Chudleigh, a far more metaphysical poet, describes the "ruffled Soul" as "a second *Chaos*" and "Anarchy within." The image she creates to express the contrast is less vivid but utterly characteristic of her mind:

Happy are they who when alone
Can with themselves converse;
Who to their Thoughts are so familiar grown,
That with Delight to some obscure Recess,
They could with silent Joy think all their Hours away,
And still think on, till the confining Clay
Fall off, and nothing's left behind
Of drossy Earth, nothing to clog the Mind,
Or hinder its Ascent to those bright Forms above,
Those glorious Beings whose exalted Sense
Transcends the highest Flights of human Wit.
(Ezell, 126)

Again, Chudleigh describes people who know themselves well: "their Thoughts are so familiar grown." They content within themselves, able to "think all their Hours away."

Memory, Time, and Elizabeth Carter

The greatest contrasts between men's and women's retreat poems are that women's are neither solitary, melancholy, nor especially steeped in sensibility. In fact, they tend to glorify Reason, as Darwall does in poems such as *Elegy written in a Garden*. Elizabeth Carter, whose many retirement poems are representative of the type, was the most learned woman of the century. Her poems have been

recognized as bringing together the distinctive elements of women's retirement poetry—"the pleasures of solitude, the absolute values of religion, and mundane contingency."[27] Her poetic career began when she was seventeen with a publication in Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1734, during the early years of transition away from Augustan poetry.[28] Carter created a remarkable lifestyle for herself, one that somehow balanced deep, solitary study, an active social life, and considerable domestic responsibilities.[29] She was part of Samuel Johnson's circle, a supporter, friend, and correspondent of literary women, responsible for her father's household and his care until his death, and such a skilled translator of Epictetus that hers remained a standard English text at least through 1966, the last year it was reprinted in the Dent Everyman's Library series.[30]

Carter and a few other women of her generation made the educated woman a respectable member of society; they did this by blending learning, virtue, friendship, and feminine conduct in social and domestic settings.[31] Elizabeth Montagu once remarked, "Unless we could be all put into a popular ballad, set to a favourite old english tune, I do not see how we could become more universally celebrated."[32] Carter set a powerful example for women, daring to display her learning and yet maintaining the reputation of a domestic, social, and moral paragon. For instance, in the May 1738 issue of the *Gentleman's Magazine* she replied to Samuel Johnson in Greek and Latin.[33] Carter always seemed to be examining things independently, and her sharp mind often exposed the limitations of accepted opinions. Whether in subversively building a multidimensional comparison of Elizabeth Singer Rowe to Lord Bolingbroke into *On the Death of Mrs. Rowe*[34] or in the witty commonplaces exchanged in *A Dialogue*, she managed to create a shadowy calm, philosophical, even superior stance of her own.

Carter begins poem after poem with an easy address to a companion: "Say, dear *Bethia*," "Come *Musidora*, come, and with me share / The sober Pleasures of this solemn Scene," "Come dear *Emilia*, and enjoy / Reflexion's fav'rite Hour."[35] She is typical in consistently inviting someone into her intimate space. In their secluded settings they find or meet an intimate friend or imagine with striking immediacy such a person there. In one of Carter's poems, "in spite of Time and Distance" becomes a theme. First she wonders how she can still feel her friend's absence so keenly, and then "thy Image rises to my Sight," and the poem is transformed as the cold wintry scene becomes "gay as *Eden*." From that point on, it is as if they were together talking of beauty, pleasure, and virtue. She writes, "Thy lov'd Idea ever meets my View, / Of ev'ry Joy, of ev'ry Wish a Part."[36]

Numerous women poets were Carter's casual and intimate friends, and they

all wrote beautiful retirement poetry. For example, she and Jane Brereton were enthusiastic correspondents, and she was a subscriber to Sarah Dixon's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1740). She and Catherine Talbot had been friends since childhood, and Hester Mulso Chapone became a very close friend after the two met at Canterbury in 1749. These women had much in common. Talbot wrote poetry from childhood and was carefully educated in the Thomas Secker family, especially in the classics, English and French literature, and history. Both women learned mathematics and astronomy from Thomas Wright. Letters between Carter and Talbot discuss French philosophy, memoirs, histories, and plays as if they were native speakers.[37] Secker became bishop of Oxford and dean of St. Paul's and later archbishop of Canterbury, and Catherine lived in Lambeth Palace. She reluctantly refused marriage to George Berkeley, son of the philosopher, but remained an intimate friend of his until his death. Carter published Talbot's writings after her death.[38] Almost nothing is known of Sarah Dixon except that she was encouraged by the John Bunces and her poems were "corrected for the press" by John, vicar of St. Stephen's, near Canterbury (Todd, s.v. "Dixon"). Thus, she was another woman encouraged by a clergyman and with access to his good library.

Today all but forgotten, Hester Mulso Chapone did not write much poetry. Like Carter, she lost her mother early, assumed management of her father's household, and learned history, geography, and languages, including Latin, Italian, and French. Both were unusually proficient musicians, part of Johnson's and Richardson's circles, and known by their contemporaries to be learned and modest. The volume of Chapone's collected works that contains poetry was dedicated to Carter,[39] who was her friend, and many of her poems are on the same subjects but in very different poetic forms. She too celebrates retirement and the contemplative life. Some of their poems seem to be companion pieces or exercises they agreed to share, such as Carter's *Written at Midnight in a Thunder Storm* and Chapone's *Written during a violent Storm at Midnight. 1749*. Carter's fast-moving tetrameter couplets contrast to Chapone's complex iambic pentameter sextains with tail rhyme, yet the poems have the same trajectory. Some of their poems show the influence of the male poets who drew inspiration from melancholy: "Thou gentle nurse of pleasing woe!" Chapone begins *On Solitude*, and she personifies solitude as "melancholy maid." In this poem she brings together all the favorite terms of Carter's poems; Fancy, Solitude, and Wisdom are set in dynamic relationships and weighed against one another. Near the end of the ode, she pays tribute to Carter by identifying her as Wisdom's companion.

In *An Irregular Ode, To Mrs. Elizabeth Carter*, Chapone reveals Epictetus's appeal to them both. In a headnote she says that Carter recommended Epictetus as "productive of Fortitude," and the ode begins, "Come, Epictetus, arm my breast." Very much the poetry of ideas, the ode is still musical and uses alliteration especially well as she pleads, "Superior let my spirit rise." Her mind and philosophy are not permeated by classical modes of thinking, however, and the poem takes a strong turn away from philosophy: "But see! what sudden glories from the sky / To my benighted soul appear," and later, "Hark! thunder breaks the air, and angels speak! / Behold the Saviour of the world!" If this image of Christ and religion is conventional, it is also startling in that it is used to assert the purposes of poetry and rebuke Carter: "Far nobler precepts should thy page adorn. / O, rather guide me to the sacred source / Of real wisdom, real force." Chapone probably did not understand fully Carter's reasons for translating Epictetus or her theory of translation,[40] but, significantly, she takes the same voice and stance of authority based on education and the power of her mind. As Claudia Thomas has argued, Carter was one of the women who "established a new image of female 'authority.' "[41] Thomas rightly recognizes Mary Astell, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Hannah More, and Chapone as among the women who managed to be learned, respected, and liked.

Carter's retirement poems illustrate the trends and popular aspects of her time but also make vivid the major contrasts between women's and men's midcentury retirement poems. In women's retirement poetry absence is never more than a momentary realization, one filled immediately with memory, with imaginary conversations, with reference to Neoplatonic images, or with Christian reassurances. The opening line of Carter's *To [Miss Talbot]*, "How sweet the Calm of this sequester'd Shore," luxuriates in the evening solitude, and by verse 5 she adds "faithful Memory" as one of the special pleasures of evening contemplation:

> Here, faithful Mem'ry wakens all her Pow'rs,
> She bids her fair ideal Forms ascend,
> And quick to ev'ry gladden'd Thought restores
> The social Virtue, and the absent Friend.
>
> (71)

For the rest of the poem it is as if her friend were beside her, and Carter describes the evening and her friend "smiling and serene." The remembered or present friend becomes a complementary part of settings of pure pleasure, reflection, and freedom. She repeats this theme, this mood, and this movement over and over. It is in *How sweet the calm* that Talbot's "soft persuasion" is inseparable

from the peaceful scene, and both lift the poet's "listening soul" to Heaven.[42] Bethia in *To [Miss D'Aeth]* brings to mind spring scenes and that "Knolton in bloom aptly signifies her mind."[43] In *To the Right Hon. Lady Dartrey* Carter writes:

> Yes: when from ev'ry busy Scene retir'd,
> Amidst the solemn Twilight's dubious Rays,
> Thy Thoughts by peaceful Solitude inspir'd,
> Recall the Phantoms of departed Days.
> (99)

Their thoughts also go above the "starry Sphere," and as in a few of Carter's poems, the final verse adds friendly angels to their society. Laetitia Pilkington dedicates an entire poem to celebrating memory; in one verse of *Memory. A Poem* she writes, "And when at length we quit this mortal Scene, / Thou still shalt with our tender Friends remain, / And Time and Death shall strike at thee in Vain" (Tucker, 50–51). Memory has an unusual place in *To the Muse*, a poem in which Dixon speaks for many of these poets:

> But — e're the long, the irksome Day was done,
> Oh! how I've sigh'd, and wish'd my self alone:
> 'Tis then the Soul her *Heaven* born Freedom finds,
> Learns its own *Worth*. . . .

This is one of the best poems that takes as its theme how retirement allows self-discovery and a knowledge of the self that neither hardship nor the chaos of the city can shake. With these lines Dixon evokes Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage, and we but players . . ." and reflects on how various people "traverse the stage." The Muse supplies the place of a friend, one to whom she is returning after yielding to friends who warned her to "shun thy *Syren* Note." With this friend the "whirlwind" of feelings that never let her rest is channeled into all the primary theatrical emotions (love, fear, pity) and poetic expressions ("Numbers melting as the *Mantuan* Swain, / Tuneful as *Orpheus* . . ."). Her recollections of the earlier time when she was devoted to writing lead to a kind of rebirth, a "freeing" of her "ruffl'd Soul":

> what Joy to find
> My lov'd Companion to my Wishes kind!
> Nature resumes her Bloom, and my past Years
> Are in Oblivion lost; a new gay World appears!
> Serene the Air. . . .[44]

With the return to the Muse and to writing Dixon also returns to an appreciation of nature and to the joy of a tranquil mind. This poem, like so many women's retirement poems, ends with a union of the contented self that knows itself, nature, and virtue: "Here fearless Innocence has fixt her Seat, / Queen of all chaste Desires, and calm Retreat; / Without Allay, her Pleasures does bestow." Similarly, Chudleigh's *To Clorissa* moves from self-contemplation to a renewed appreciation of nature.

The memory of the literary tradition in which these women were working is often an enriching addition to these poems. The Renaissance emblem of Memory was a woman with a pen in her right hand and a book or palimpsest in the other, thus associating writing, memory, and memorials.[45] Sarah Dixon's *Farewell to L—— Park* opens with an invocation to Sydney and a recollection of his nature poetry: "The fam'd *Arcadian* Plains and shady Groves, / Joy of the Shepherds, Scene of Royal Loves." The poem then moves to the pleasures she shared with her friend in their "well known Recess." The pleasures of their conversation, their mutual sharing of joys and disappointments, and their retreat into a world of pure virtue and communion mingle with an idealized memory of the natural setting ("carpet Walks," "the fragrant *May*").[46] Similarly, *On Receiving a Letter from a Lady, I had neither seen, nor heard of, for some Years* is about vivid memories, and Dixon stretches for a universal rendering of experience. The memories "Rush'd on my Soul, . . . / And *Time*, methought, relinquish'd half my Years." The first half of the poem erases the years that have passed, and the second half has the speaker attempt to erase the miles between them. Speaking as though her friend were beside her, Dixon does what friends often do. First, she sympathizes with her, then she recognizes their common situation, and finally she offers consolation:

> Yet watchful Providence conducts with Care;
> Proportions to our Strength, the Weight we bear;
> Or Thee and I, *Constantia*, long ago,
> Had sunk beneath accumulated Woe.
> . . . . . .
> One *Refuge* yet remains for every Ill;
> (Submission to the Great Disposer's Will.)
> There Safety dwells; thither let *us* retire;
> 'Twill bring at last, the *Peace* we both desire.[47]

The remarkable thing about this poem is the way that Dixon maintains sympathy, mutuality of situation and hopes, and recollection of her friend's character throughout a poem that is based on the platitudes of her time's conventional

Christian faith ("Proportions to our Strength," "Submission to the Great Disposer's Will"). Each couplet gives a closed thought, but together the couplets also develop the bond between the friends and advance the poem toward the conclusion: "But let right Reason dictate every Line, / Glow in each Breast, in all our Actions shine" (160).

Mary Barber, certainly one of the most revisionary of the women poets of the 1720s and 30s, reverses this situation in *Written from Dublin, to a Lady in the Country.* Unable to accept an invitation to go to the country, the poet imagines herself there with her friend: "Thro' your *Versailles* with Pleasure rove, / Admire the Gardens, and the Grove; / See Nature's bounteous Hand. . . ."[48] Barber knew the form of these poems well, and this poem moves from details such as "blushing Peach," singing birds, and "Kine come lowing home" to a stunning view of the setting sun over mountains that completely integrates the metaphysical theme of many of the retirement poems:

> Then raptur'd view the setting SUN;
> The rich, diffusive God behold,
> On distant Mountains pouring Gold,
> Gilding the beauteous rising Spire,
> . . . . . .
> Thence to the higher Heav'ns I soar,
> And the great Architect adore.[49]

Because of the vivid imagery, a unity of allusion that includes the shepherds who experienced the angels' proclamation of Jesus's birth, and the gradual rising of the poem to Jehovah's throne, this poem suggests the potential and pleasure of one of the most familiar compositions of the period. The archetypal model, Finch's *Nocturnal Reverie*, moves beautifully from inanimate nature to plants to animals to her friend and finally to the soul.[50] Her poem and those original poems that follow become poems of vision—by turns and occasionally simultaneously immediate, interior, and metaphysical. The retired scene and state of mind bring absence into presence through memory, imagination, religious revelation, or dream.

Many of these poems include the *beatus ille* set piece, as Jane Brereton's *Verses on the Loss of a Friend* does. The opening verse deftly alludes to each component:

> Ah! happy Solitude, thrice blest the Day!
> When in thy Shades I pass'd my Hours away;
> Exempt from Cares, retir'd from public Noise,

> Nought to prevent, or interrupt my Joys:
> No anxious Fears my Quiet to molest,
> No Storms to discompose my *Halcyon* Breast;
> Not Love, Ambition, Pride, or female Strife,
> Serene each Thought and blameless as my Life.[51]

This familiar image of the happy life is followed by an exuberant description of "the Glories which the Summer yields." The earth is fruitful and the flowers abundant, the river beautiful and the bird songs glorious, and "To crown all this, and make my Joys compleat, / A Friend I had near this belov'd Retreat." The poem takes an original and surprising turn. Rather than the memory becoming a happy companion, the knowledge of her friend's unhappiness haunts the place, and she leaves it. Unlike in so many of these poems, the companion in this poem is not an image vividly rendered from recollection of a specific time and then frozen like a statue in the immediate scene; it has a story of its own that becomes a microcosm of the mutability of all earthly things: "We lost our *Eden*, our contented State," speaks equally to her friend's happiness and their friendship as to the biblical fall of humankind.

Nor do the women court melancholy, as it is generally agreed many male poets of the time do.[52] It was the mood of poetic sensibility and inspiration, and although it often led to religious reflections on mutability and mortality, there was often an element of what John Sena called "a hedonistic delight in the pleasures of pathos and sadness."[53] In Carter's poems, as in most of the women's poems, melancholy steals upon the poet or is a spontaneous response to a scene, time of day, or experience. It is not courted, and it is definitely not hedonistic or self-indulgent. There may be a sense of the luxury of solitude and time to explore the feelings and associations, but the kind of self-pity some readers find in, for instance, the conclusion of *Elegy in a Country Church-Yard* is absent. The archetypal setting, mood, and movement are encapsulated in the following poem by Carter:

> While clear the Night, and ev'ry Thought serene,
> Let Fancy wander o'er the solemn Scene:
> And, wing'd by active Contemplation, rise
> Amidst the radiant Wonders of the Skies.[54]

If melancholy is the mood, women's poems almost invariably rise beyond melancholy to religious revelation, and their poetry can often be traced along a path leading to the sublime nature description found in Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of*

Udolpho, Frances Brooke's *History of Emily Montague*, and the poetry of Helen Maria Williams. Carter's poems often include direct contradictions to the melancholy mood:

> To Nature rescu'd from Corruption's Pow'r,
> The glad Archangel lifts his awful Voice:
> He swears that Time and Change shall be no more. . . .[55]

By 1763 Carter was counseling in *To Miss Sutton*, "Why wanders Fancy thro' the Cypress Gloom, / Where boding Ravens croke the Dirge of Night? / Direct it's View to *Eden*'s living Bloom" (91).

This does not mean that Carter does not enjoy writing "graveyard" sections with appeals to the senses and to the thrill of horror. One verse of her *Ode to Melancholy* reads,

> Ye Midnight Horrors! Awful Gloom!
> Ye silent Regions of the Tomb,
> My future peaceful Bed:
> Here shall my weary Eyes be clos'd,
> And ev'ry Sorrow lie repos'd
> In Death's refreshing Shade.
>
> (80)

Men were free to include sentimental self-indulgence and emotional outbursts, both dangerous modes for women because of the stereotype of the sex's less rational nature. Carter flirts with sentimentality, but the quiet lines that speak of repose and composure lead surely to an assurance of salvation. A relatively early poem (1739), *Ode to Melancholy* has obscure lines that parade her learning, such as "Sublim'd by thee, the Soul aspires / Beyond the Range of low Desires."[56] Nevertheless, it came to be printed as often as her *Ode to Wisdom* and by 1758 was selected far more often; collections usually included it together with *A Night Piece*. In tune with the fashion, *Ode to Melancholy* begins by courting melancholy and uses the expected exclamatory apostrophe: "Come, Melancholy! silent pow'r, / Companion of my lonely hour." Much more than in her other poems, it lingers over macabre thoughts of death, even imaging the dead "Consociate with my sister-worms." The final narrative of the soul, from "arm'd by faith, intrepid pays / The universal debt" to the "last morn's fair op'ning ray," is unusually brief and without any hint of the sublime.

Some of these poems seem to draw on a place that made a lasting impression

on Carter, a crumbling ancient country house and its chapel that she frequently explored after its last owner had died. In "Reflections Suggested by the Sight of Ruins" (1767) she reflects on "that astonishing mixture of deep awe, soft melancholy, and exquisite delight, which the imagination experiences from such views of ruin and desolation." She compares the crumbling house that would be sold for its materials and then razed and the reflections on impermanence it aroused to the biblical quotation "the earth abideth for ever" (Ecclesiastes 1:4) and the "superiority" of the soul.[57] In *To Mrs. Vesey* the image of ruins is again central, and the movement the same as in the essay:

> In shapeless Grandeur thro' the dubious Shade,
> That *Gothic* Structure rises unconfin'd;
> Imagination feels a sacred Dread,
> And awes to sober Thought th' astonish'd Mind.
>
> Successive Seasons as they roll, survey
> Still unimpair'd these solid Columns stand,
> While cold and senseless moulder, in Decay,
> The Limbs which rais'd them, and the Head which plann'd.
>
> Not for themselves the toiling Artists build,
> Not for himself contrives the studious Sage: . . .
>
> (94–95)

One of Carter's best poems, *To Mrs. Vesey* reflects not just on the ruins but, characteristic of her, also on the planners, the higher-ranking people with the wealth and imagination to build the now-crumbling edifices. The perspective is broad, as she keeps death and immortality, past, present, humankind, and her individual friend in firm relationships that become commentary on one another.

Many of these poems are set in the evening, a time that, as in men's poems, often brings mortality to mind. Even in these evening poems, women's are decidedly not the poetry of melancholy, of which lines 1003–5 from Thomson's *Autumn* are an epitome: "The desolated Prospect thrills the Soul. / He comes! he comes! in every Breeze the Power / Of PHILOSOPHIC MELANCHOLY comes!" Nor do they rely on Neoplatonic feelings or generalized mood poetry. Evening is the time of luxurious freedom. "Farewell the Objects of diurnal Care, / Your Task be ended with the setting Sun" and "Solitude, and silent Eve restore / The philosophic Temper of the Soul," Carter writes in *To [Miss Talbot]* ("How sweet the Calm of this sequester'd Shore") (70). Part of the pulling away from the day and its "busy Tumult" is "restore," a familiar state of mind that she courts. Her

transitional verse mingles pure enjoyment of the beauty of the evening and the inexpressible:

> What beauteous Visions o'er the soften'd Heart,
> In this still Moment all their Charms diffuse!
> Serener Joys, and brighter Hopes impart,
> And chear the Soul with more than mortal Views.

As the light of day fades, the radiance of heaven grows verse by verse. Similarly, Darwall begins poems such as *The Pleasures of Contemplation* and *Elegy on the Uses of Poetry* with invocations that promise greater clarity and self-knowledge. Like Carter's, they blend a lifestyle with an aesthetic, established world of poetic creativity. Darwall writes in the latter, "Hail! gentle *Evening*, clad in sober grey, / Mild Mother, Thou, of *Fancy*'s airy Train; / How sweet to fly the vain Pursuits of Day."[58] And in *The Pleasures of Contemplation* she writes, "The Mind, now rescu'd from the Cares of Day, / Roves unrestrain'd thro' the wide Realms of Space."[59] The poem concludes, ". . . Oh! without thee, / Fair *Friendship*, Life were nothing; without thee, / The Page of Fancy wou'd no longer charm, / And Solitude disgust e'en pensive Minds" (77). This is a specific refutation of the conventions in retirement poems by the men of Darwall's generation. She invokes the images of the graveyard school in her opening verses ("dreary grove," "Night Raven") only to displace them. More significantly, however, her poems illustrate the distinctive space that is both an imagined and a material setting for friendship, genuine personal feeling and awareness, and poetic inspiration.

One of the most striking elements of Carter's retirement poems is her association of evening and even night with reason. "While Night in solemn Shade invests the Pole, / And calm Reflexion soothes the pensive Soul; / While Reason undisturb'd asserts her Sway," an untitled poem begins (32). Using tetrameter quatrains instead of the Horatian form with heroic couplets, she writes in *To ——. 1748*,

> The Midnight Moon serenely smiles,
> O'er Nature's soft Repose;
> No low'ring Cloud obscures the Sky,
> Nor russling Tempest blows.
>
> Now ev'ry Passion sinks to Rest,
> The throbbing Heart lies still:
> And varying Schemes of Life no more
> Distract the lab'ring Will.

In Silence hush'd, to Reason's Voice,
  Attends each mental Pow'r:
Come dear *Emilia*, and enjoy
  Reflexion's fav'rite Hour.
. . . . . .
Vain is alike the Joy we seek,
  And vain what we possess,
Unless harmonious Reason tunes
  The Passions into Peace.
(65–67)

Reason is central to this poem, the foundation of the image of contented happiness of the conclusion, and the bridge between "the Music of the Mind" and the harmony of the spheres, an all-permeating divine order. Evening, reflection, and reason are inseparable in these poems and lead to philosophical calm and faith in God. The final line of this poem is, "The Music of the Mind," an image evocative of the way the "tempered" mind is a microcosm of the harmony of the spheres. Carter seems especially aware of the double meaning of *tempered* as moderated and as strengthened through an industrial process. The image captures the reality of individual effort and external pressures. In a scene of the moon shining on the sea, she addresses the moon, "Blest Emblem of that equal State, / Which I this Moment feel within: / Were Thought to Thought succeeding rolls, / All is placid and serene."[60] The poem has opened with a contrasting image of the moon and the sea:

Thou restless fluctuating Deep,
  Expressive of the human Mind,
In thy for ever varying Form,
  My own inconstant Self I find.

Between these states of mind and throughout the rest of the poem are recollections of happiness and recognitions of times of sorrow, the heat and cold applied in tempering processes.

As Sena points out, "Night becomes a period of intellectual alertness, penetrating insight, and profound reflection," the time of day of "rationality, reflection, and constancy."[61] Anne Finch foreshadows the later poets' association of reason and evening and uses that time of day to produce the effect of a prospect poem.[62] Through a reworking of elements from *Grongar Hill* and especially from the "happy man" part of the *Georgics*, book 2, she achieves "that clarity of vision

and point of view which reveals form" characteristic of male survey poems.[63] Clearly engaged with *Grongar Hill* and other poems of the same type, Finch moves English poetry toward more interior and intimate themes without losing engagement with the world around her. When she displays Sitter's "retreat from history," she substitutes an engagement with the present, with the people around her, their states of mind, and her own mind, interior life, and struggle for tranquillity and happiness. Always in relation to others, she is typical of even the most intellectual of the retirement poets who follow her.

There is an element of philosophy in all of Carter's poems. It may be echoes of philosophy that she knows or it may be a philosophical approach to an inquiry. Many of the poems conclude with the kind of orthodox religious statement common to the poetry of Finch and Rowe, but the composition of settings and the states of mind are experimental and generally ahead of their time. For a while Carter's *Ode to Melancholy* was more often reprinted than her most famous poem, *Ode to Wisdom*, and it is very much in harmony with the hundreds of midcentury poems that court melancholy and find it to inspire important reflections. Some of the lines are pure "graveyard school":

> Here, cold to pleasure's tempting forms,
> Consociate with my sister-worms,
> And mingle with the dead.
> Ye midnight horrors! awful gloom!
> Ye silent regions of the tomb!

Yet the sentiment is conventionally mainstream religious: "Till the last morn's fair op'ning ray / Unfolds the bright eternal day / Of active life and bliss."[64] Nature is a reflection of the human mind as well as solace and exemplar. Carter begins *Written Extempore on the Sea-Shore*, for example,

> Thou restless fluctuating Deep,
> Expressive of the human Mind,
> In thy for ever varying Form,
> My own inconstant Self I find.
> (38)

In the early nineteenth century, Dyce, Rowton, and others returned to printing Carter's *Ode to Wisdom* and dropped *Ode to Melancholy*. When *Ode to Wisdom* was first published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1747, it was called "a nocturnal ode." It is set at midnight and begins,

The solitary Bird of Night
Thro' the pale Shades now wings his Flight,
And quits the Time-shook Tow'r.
(85)

Nothing else in the poem is in this mood.[65] It ends with Wisdom's vision that "all, but *Virtue's* solid Joys, / Is Vanity and Woe." As conventional as this ending is, the poem nevertheless displays originality in the presentation of ubiquitous sentiments:

To me thy better Gifts impart,
. . . . . .
For Wealth, the Smiles of glad Content,
For Pow'r, it's [*sic*] amplest, best Extent,
An Empire o'er my Mind.
(87)

The poem is offered to Pallas, "queen of every art," and its dignified, perfectly regular verses present Carter's philosophy of happiness. The composition of the poem is sure and pleasing, as it moves from the poet's "faithful to thy summons bend, / At Wisdom's awful seat" to an exposition of the gifts of Wisdom. Carter's poetry, like that of poets who can be grouped with her, demonstrates a sustained quest for wisdom and contentment. She finds the secret of the most valuable things in wisdom:

Thy breath inspires the Poet's song,
The Patriot's free, unbias'd tongue,
The Hero's gen'rous strife;
Thine are Retirement's silent joys,
And all the sweet endearing ties
Of still, domestic life.

Finch and Chudleigh had emphasized that the retirement poem was always about states of mind. From Aphra Behn through Mary Chudleigh, women conceived gendered characteristics within an androgynous — or sexless — mind. Chudleigh wrote, for instance,

> What can afford a higher, a more *masculine* Pleasure, a purer, more transporting Delight, than to retire into our selves, and there curiously attentively inspect the serious Operations of our Souls, compare Idea's, consult our Reason, and view all the Beauties of our Intellect, the inimitable Stroaks of Divine Wisdom, which are

> visible in our Faculties, and those Participations of infinite Power, which are discoverable in our Wills?[66]

Her retirement poems and those of others in her generation have this perspective and therefore create a poetic sensibility and a distinctive perceiving being who looks at the world within his or her sight range but whose primary gaze is inward. In sharp contrast to poems like Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*, in which the poet ranges freely through all time and space and attests to a "universal" set of moral directives, these poems deliberately create a direct trajectory. Over all, Chudleigh's poetry is restrained, and her striving for inner tranquillity is the predominant subject. Over and over she expresses an ardent wish for, as expressed in these lines from *The Resolve*, "A Soul, which cannot be depress'd by Grief, / Not too much rais'd by the sublimest Joy; / Which can, when troubled, give it self Relief" (Ezell, 144). In quatrains, Pindarics, epistles, songs, and dialogues she versifies this sober theme and the necessity of retirement in a harmonious garden setting. Margaret Ezell, editor of Chudleigh's poems, says rightly that her works "constitute . . . a continuous philosophical exploration of human passions and the ways to live a truly harmonious life" (xxiii). Chudleigh's identity emerges, and her assurance in asserting it grows in these poems. In poem after poem she evokes this searching and reflective state of mind with a skillful uniting of imagery, meter, and content. In *On the Death of his Highness the Duke of Glocester* she writes, "Cool was the place, and quiet as my Mind. . . ." "My Soul seem'd from my Body flown: / Vain World, said I, take, take my last adieu, / I'le to my self, and to my Muse be true" (48–49).

Many retirement poems associate study with wisdom and self-knowledge. "On what wou'd I my Wishes fix?" Elizabeth Tollet asks in *The Portrait:*

> A lazy Life I first wou'd choose,
> A lazy Life best suits the Muse:
> A few choice Books of ev'ry Sort
> . . . . . .
> Friends that in any Dress would come;
> To whom I'd always be at home:
> My Table still shou'd cover'd be,
> On this Side Books, on that Bohea.[67]

This lighthearted poem contrasts the empty pleasures of cards and coaches to the private scene of books and friends. In *To my Brother at St. John's College in Cam-*

bridge, for instance, Tollet says that she has "the best companions when I've none: / I read great Tully's page. . ." (Lonsdale, 97). One of the most lamented absences in Sarah Dixon's *On the Loss of Stella's Friendship* is the time she and a friend spent on a shady bench admiring "*Shakepear's* Sense . . . / Or *Congreve*'s Wit or *Waller*'s Fire." Extending the kinds of improvements that friendship makes, Dixon exclaims, "How useful have our Minutes past, / While each improv'd the other's Taste."[68] Especially moving in light of the way her life turned out is Pilkington's *Verses Wrote in a Library:*

> Seat for contemplation fit,
> Sacred nursery of Wit!
> Let me here enwrapped in pleasure,
> Taste the sweets of learned leisure;
> Vain, deceitful world, adieu,
> I more solid bliss pursue.
> . . . . . .
> Learning can the soul refine,
> Raise from human to divine.
> Come then, all ye sacred dead,
> Who for virtue wrote or bled;
> On my mind intensely beam,
> Touch it with your hallowed flame.
> And thou chaste and lovely muse,
> Who didst once thy dwelling choose
> In Orinda's spotless breast,
> Condescend to be my guest;
> Bring with thee the bloomy pair,
> Young-eyed health and virtue fair;
> Here your purest rays impart,
> So direct and guard my heart,
> That it may a Temple be
> Worthy Heaven, and worthy thee.
> (Fullard, 207–8)

As in so many of these poems, the heart and mind become a space dedicated to the highest purposes of poetry, art "worthy" of heaven and worthy of Poetry. Here, too, we see Pilkington as she wishes she could always be.

Reflection and Difference

Although Elizabeth Tollet did not leave a large body of poetry, her poems are often strikingly conceived. Her understanding of poetic kinds went beyond form and subject to the deep structures of feeling they had been created to express. *To my Brother at St. John's College in Cambridge* begins as a creative, personal retirement poem. Tollet describes her own solitude and uses the trope of the friendship poem: "Blest be the man, who first the method found / In absence to discourse. . . ." She then imagines her brother's retreat, which includes his imagined, solitary walk through the parks and along the Cam. At this point the poem takes an unexpected turn:

> Think, when you tread the venerable shade,
> Here Cowley sung, and tuneful Prior played.
> O! would the Muse thy youthful breast inspire
> With charming raptures and poetic fire!
> Then thou might'st sing (who better claims thy lays?)
> A tributary strain to Oxford's praise:
> Thy humble verse from him shall fame derive,
> And graced with Harley's name for ever live.
> First sing the man in constant temper found,
> Unmoved when Fortune smiled, undaunted when she frowned.
>
> (Lonsdale, 98)

The earlier retirement poems progressed toward ideological ends, as this one does. This is, of course, an early example of the way retirement poems melted into friendship poems—this one unusual because the friend is a brother—and could accommodate political expression. This 1724 poem repeats Swift's, Defoe's, Pope's, and David Mallet's praise in highly similar words for Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, who had been imprisoned in the Tower for nearly two years after Queen Anne's death and the triumph of the Whigs.[69] Pope, for instance, wrote in his *Epistle to Robert Earl of Oxford:* "A Soul supreme, in each hard Instance try'd, / Above all Pain, all Passion, and all Pride, / The Rage of Pow'r, the Blast of publick Breath" (lines 23–25).

Tollet had observed Harley's first days in the Tower, for he was lodged with her father, who "looked after him with honesty and gratitude" until his enemies

spitefully had him moved to a less comfortable part of the Tower.[70] Upon his release, Harley retired to Herefordshire, and Tollet understands that he became a latter-day example of the Commonwealth or Restoration statesman finding contentment in retirement after a change of political fortune. Part of the interest and originality of this poem is the contrasting examples of retirement provided by her with her books, her youthful brother on his walk on campus, and Harley with his past. Remarkably, Tollet also brings elements of the georgic into her poem:

> Survey the useful labours of the swain,
> . . . . . .
> The loaded trees with blushing apples graced,
> Or hardy pears, which scorn the wintry blast,
> Or see the sturdy hinds from harvest come. . . .

Like the hardy pears, Harley scorns his change of fortune. Tollet uses her brother, her disguised personal experience, echoes of male poets' panegyrics, and images from georgics to praise Harley. She takes a political position by calling Harley "patriot" but uses her strong sense of history, national and poetic, to make the poem express a multidimensional sense of England itself. This reference to the laboring, so different from the representation of labor in the work of Mary Collier, Mary Leapor, and Ann Yearsley, the authors of "plebian georgic," is typical of the men and women of Tollet's class. Labor is an essential part of Englishness and to some extent underpins empire, but poets from the upper classes assume a different kind of work and power for their subjects, as Tollet does when she admonishes her brother about the best subjects for his poetry.

Rachel Crawford argues that georgic poetry "dominated the collective imagination from the Act of Union until the reign of George III."[71] Before 1780, meldings of georgic and retirement poems tended to move from an individual object to a more distant object or a broader scene and then to what would later be called a kind of manifest-destiny image—the scene supplying the underpinnings of a patriotic, imperialistic, or commercial conclusion. Addison began his definition, "A *Georgic* therefore is some part of the Science of Husbandry put into a pleasing dress."[72] The patriot of John Dyer's *The Fleece*—John Russell, Duke of Bedford—is landed gentry, as Robert Harley was in Tollet's poem. Husbandry, by the time Thomson wrote *The Seasons*, was a masculine *science* with implications of wise management. Thus, Russell, who drained the fens on his estate but had been secretary of state, exemplified a modern example of the science of husban-

dry, a man who labored in the country's interests rather than with his hands.[73] Russell, like Harley, who came out of retirement and fought ill health to help defeat the Peerage Bill, was a perfect subject for the blending of the retirement, georgic, and Horatian poem. Recalling that the *Georgics* were written to celebrate peace and prosperity after Augustus's wars and had an instructional thrust, poets often composed the movement toward the owner, the maker of order, with clear didactic intentions.[74] By the end of her poem Tollet has made Harley and her brother the exemplary representatives and hope of England. Hugh Jenkins goes so far as to treat Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* as a country estate poem and contends that the "estate's products, rather than becoming part of a 'naturally useful' economy of mutual exchange and hospitality become instead commodities, and, by extension, the foundations of an Empire."[75] In the roles of patriot and *vir bonus*, roles that Pope so often assumes as his poetic voices, ownership and responsible, virtuous, patriotic use of commodities and wealth are the epitomes of modern husbandry. Unlike in descriptive or picturesque poems, well-rendered scenery and the contemplation of it are not enough. Swift grumbled about poems that were "all Descriptions, and nothing is doing," and Johnson demanded at the least "historical retrospection or incidental meditation."[76]

Karen O'Brien proposes that the georgic, more than any other literary genre or mode, "assumed the burden of securing the aesthetic and moral links between country, city, and empire."[77] With Virgil's *Georgics* standing to some extent behind them all, "patriotic rhapsodies which arise expansively out of rural descriptions" are to be expected. Even the emphasis on native products and details such as natural wool, not dyed ("Purple *Poyson* of *Assyrian* Pride," line 652), in Dryden's translation contributes to the nationalistic themes.[78] As Sambrook points out, the "implication" of lines 32–77 of Thomson's *Spring* is that "the local harmony between the husbandman, his team, and his land is the foundation of the larger harmony of a wide mercantile empire."[79] *Cooper's Hill*, *Grongar Hill*, and *Windsor Forest* include extensive descriptions that become celebrations of trade and Britain's commercial might and aspirations. In fact, David Radcliffe gives Denham credit for "reforming poetical processes; [*Cooper's Hill*] assembles the repertoire of English georgic—history, politics, religion, natural science, character, encomium, allegory, *ecphrasis*, and epigram"; and Radcliffe concludes that the poem is "less about agriculture than politics."[80] Philosophical, aesthetic, and contemplative musing came easily to women poets, but an important structural theme and movement in midcentury retirement poetry influenced by georgics—imperialism—did not. When women do bring it into retirement poems,

they often embed rather than foreground it. Tollet's portrayal of herself progresses from her "pensive" repose to,

> But when the sun declines the task I change,
> And round the walls and antique turrets range;
> From hence a varied scene delights the eyes.
> See! here Augusta's massive temples rise,
> There meads extend, and hills support the skies;
> See! there the ships, an anchored forest, ride,
> And either India's wealth enrich the tide.
>
> (Lonsdale, 97)

Looking in different directions from the tower, she sees the things that make England great—London, the open, agricultural land, and the Thames with its ships and imports from the East and West Indies.

As Tim Fulford says, "The Englishman's proprietorial love of country had—and has—aggression as part of the scene."[81] The georgic fostered such themes, and women sometimes contested them. Elizabeth Carter's *To [Dr. Walwyn]. On his Design of cutting down a Shady Walk* insists that Nature "formed" the trees "For Contemplation's Aid." She devotes four verses to classical writers, including Plato and Virgil, who found inspiration in shady groves, and concludes,

> Not all the glowing Fruits, that blush
> On *India*'s sunny Coast,
> Can recompense thee for the Worth
> Of one Idea lost.
>
> (40–41)

This poem was often included in eighteenth-century anthologies, perhaps partly because of its contrarian stand, as well as its technical mastery. A reviewer for the *Critical Review* praised it for being a "correct" ode and called it "elegant" twice.[82] It was consistently printed in Colman-Thornton's and Dodsley's collections. In general, however, women's poetry usually highlighted the individual, her sensibility, and God's love for her. Part of Carter's importance is her unflinching willingness to display her learning, as she does in the classical allusions in this poem, and her ability to take fashionable themes and poetic styles and mold them into clear, evaluative statements. Many of her poems share the formulaic structure, but the central section—on the individual's sensibility—is very much that of an educated, intellectual and intellectualizing being.

A reflective process is always being driven by, or going on behind, the descriptions and the final resolution in retirement poetry. In women's poetry it is almost invariably toward tranquillity and peace of mind, in men's often toward melancholy and toward their own or even the nation's death. In both, landscape and natural scenes are emblems of nature as a principle of order, "of which the ordering mind is part," and a principle of creation, "of which the creative mind is part, and from which we may learn the truths of our own sympathetic nature." The kinds of insights and meanings that conclude the poems are the product not merely of the landscape but of its meaning (form) and the processes by which such meaning is perceived.[83] As Fulford says, the British landscapes "had a complex and changing political significance in debates within and about the nation," but they assumed a discernible order, reflective of divine order, that was "observable in the fields of Britain."[84] The propensities exhibited by the conclusions of these poems when analyzed through this lens reveal a startling revelation of gender—men's toward ego and women's toward relationship. In poem after poem, the conclusions are as much about the virtue of a friend as they are about divine nature. As Ann Messenger says of Carter's *To [Miss Talbot]*, such poems are "as much a tribute to friendship and her friend's piety as . . . a witness of God's presence in nature."[85]

Another contrast is that what women own in retirement poems is not an estate but time, a valuable possession in its own right. William Dowling argues rightly that male poets transformed ownership of property into ownership of what the aesthete beheld. Addison consolidated the attitude into a famous assertion in *Spectator* number 411: "A man of Polite Imagination . . . meets with a secret Refreshment in a Description, and often feels a greater Satisfaction in the Prospect of Fields and Meadows, than another does in the Possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of Property in every thing he sees" (Bond, *Spectator*, 3:538 [21 June 1712]). Dowling quotes Mark Akenside: "What'er adorns / The princely dome, the column and the arch, . . . / Beyond the proud possessor's narrow claim, / His tuneful breast enjoys."[86] Women never made this proprietary move. Mary Jones summarizes what they desired to own: "This wish, howe'er be mine: to live unknown, / In some serene retreat, my time my own, / To all obliging, yet a slave to none."[87] Jones's lines echo Pope's, of course, but more resonantly they synthesize all the forms of slavery—custom, marriage, domestic responsibilities, oppression—that Finch, Egerton, Rowe, and their generation had cataloged. These poems have classical roots, often echoing Dryden's translation of Horace's Ode 29, Book 3: "Happy the Man, and happy he alone, / He, who can call to day

his own" (lines 65–66). The common denominators of these poems are contemplation and, above all, discretionary time and freedom from censorious scrutiny and pressure. Dryden dedicated his translation to the Earl of Rochester, and its wonderful *carpe diem* lines are revised in women's hands to celebrate the tranquility that is the result of a virtuous life, not "What has been, has been, and I have had my hour" (line 72).[88]

Women's adaptations of the *beatus ille* set piece are far from mechanical and formulaic. Chudleigh's *The Happy Man* is very close to the original but turns upon the line, "Who more than Life, his *Friends* and Books can prize" (Ezell, 80, emphasis mine). Pilkington triumphed in an extempore "competition" with this poem:

> I envy not the Proud their Wealth,
> Their Equipage and State;
> Give me but Innocence and Health,
> I ask not to be great.
>
> I in this sweet Retirement find
> A Joy unknown to Kings,
> For Scepters to a virtuous Mind
> Seem vain and empty Things.
>
> Great *Cincinnatus* at his Plough
> With brighter Lustre shone,
> Than guilty *Caesar* e'er cou'd shew,
> Tho' seated on a Throne.
>
> Tumultuous Days, and restless Nights,
> Ambition ever knows,
> A Stranger to the calm Delights
> Of Study and Repose.
>
> Then free from Envy, Care and Strife,
> Keep me, ye Powers Divine;
> And pleas'd when ye demand my Life,
> May I that Life resign.[89]

The alliterative contrasting of Caesar and Cincinnatus, the polished simplicity, the sure meter, and the economy of paraphrase raise this poem above the many ordinary poems that followed Dryden's well-known version.

Sometimes the classical lines are kept in a unified segment of a poem, as they are in Chudleigh's and Pilkington's, and sometimes they are diffused throughout a poem, as they are in Finch's *Nocturnal Reverie* and *Petition for an Absolute Retreat*.[90] Darwall's *Elegy, Addressed to Mrs. Hewan* follows the structure of Horace's ode and echoes many of its lines, but it contrasts a specifically woman's retreat to the world of ambition and competition. The beginning allows the reader to identify its dialogue with Horace: "Let others glory in fond fortune's smile, / The glare of wealth, the pageantry of pow'r." The conventional "brave hero," "dark statesman," and "gay nymph" are displaced by the poet and Ethelinda (Mrs. Hewan), who, bathed in "Cynthia's silv'ry light," "hold sweet converse in some green alcove." The final verse unequivocably states the relationship of the female private to the public sphere, for Hewan is the "seat of virtue, peace and joy" and, more significantly, *she* teaches the Muse to inspire lasting poetry that is a "balm" to humankind.[91] Darwall enriches the Horatian poem at every point with the most distinctive elements of the friendship-retirement poem and manages to move to the georgics' didactic vision of the value of such an individual life to the state.

Beautiful references to the stars show these women's understanding of Virgil's thematically similar second book of the *Georgics*. Dryden's translation of Virgil reads,

> Wou'd you your Poet's first Petition hear,
> Give me the Ways of wandring Stars to know:
> The depths of Heav'n above, and Earth below.
> (lines 677–79)

Chudleigh's commendatory poem on Dryden's *Virgil* shows her grasp of its encompassing aspirations. It begins, "Thou matchless Poet, whose capacious Mind, / Contains the whole that Knowledge can impart."[92] The first half of Carter's *While clear the Night* is a beautiful reworking of this part of Virgil's poem and of the lines she quotes from Ovid's *Fasti*, his incomplete calendar of the Roman year:

> Felices animae quibus haec cognoscere primis,
> Inque domos superas scandere, cura suit.
> Credibile est illas, pariter vitiisque locisque
> Altius humanis, exeruisse coput.

The opening lines of 3 January are translated, "Who says me nay if I would tell also of the stars, their risings and their settings? That was part of my promise."

She quotes the next lines, "Ah happy souls, who first took thought to know these things and scale the heavenly mansions! Well may we believe they lifted up their heads alike above the frailties and the homes of men."[93] Without immodest self-assertion, she affirms her joy in learning and her dedication to rising above the mundane.

The poem was originally published in 1738 in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and she revised it for her *Poems on Several Occasions*. Her opening lines (quoted above) compress the "In such a night" beginning of Finch's *Nocturnal Reverie*. In an original move, she then dramatizes the wish or prayer that the poet and his translators have expressed:

> Here *Casseopeia* fills a lucid throne,
> There blaze the splendors of the *northern crown*.[94]

Her revision of this verse cuts six lines that question the perspective that "our station prize" and substitutes a more accurate version of the solar system. The revision leads more smoothly into the Virgilian knowledge of the stars, heaven, and earth as she makes substitutions such as "Where the bright Pow'r" for the *Gentleman's Magazine*'s "Where the bright beam." In both versions her vision of the night sky includes accurately identified constellations, and in the revision she strengthens their guidance. On earth their "faithful Beams conduct the wand'ring Ship," but more important, "Here, *Casseopeia* fills a lucid Throne." "Lucid" is carefully chosen, for what she sees are "the Footsteps of a ruling God." Again, the revision tightens the thematic emphases, as she makes changes to emphasize the creator God, such as "trace the Wonders of creating Pow'r" rather than the first version's "almighty pow'r."

This poem establishes its subject as space, and the galaxy with its stars and planets, several named specifically, is a transition to God, "Whose presence, unconfin'd by time or place, / Fills all the vast immensity of space / . . . / And taught the new-born planets where to roll: / With wise direction curv'd their steady Course." Although her revised conclusion ends with a modest turning away from this grand subject, she has, in fact, demonstrated a mind "Whose curious Thoughts with active Freedom soar, / And trace the Wonders of creating Pow'r."[95] This poem of Carter's ends with a conventional "some nobler Pen shall speak thy Fame," but references to the night sky often function both to set the mood and to carry a major theme. In *To [Miss Lynch]*, "Whilst thus my Thoughts," she writes, "Now cold *Aquarius* rules the frozen Sky." Sometimes, as

in this poem, she uses more muted movement in the manner of Finch to reach insights tangible yet beyond expression. She says, "Dear Object of a Love whose fond Excess / No studied Forms of Language can express." Rather than "studied Forms" she uses a narrative and a series of allusions to times of day and seasons to explain this love (12–15). Beginning "How sweet the Calm of this sequester'd Shore" in *To [Miss Talbot]*, she has a few lines alluding to metaphysical truths: "Come, while the cool, the solitary Hours / Each foolish Care, and giddy Wish controul, / . . . / Beyond the Stars transport my listening Soul" (71). Similarly, in Anna Laetitia Barbauld's lovely *Summer Evening's Meditation* evening's "more grateful hours," dominated by Diana, Venus, and the poet, are "impatient for the night," "the hour / When Contemplation" reigns. It is the night sky "Where, one by one, the living eyes of heaven / Awake" and lead the poet to God:

> adore, O man!
> The finger of thy GOD. From what pure wells
> Of milky light, what soft o'erflowing urn,
> Are all these lamps so fill'd? these friendly lamps,
> For ever streaming o'er the azure deep
> To point our path, and light us to our home.
> (M&K, 82)

This life of retirement and contemplation is often one of study, just as it had been in Milton's *Il Penseroso*.[96] The path of thought in the second half of Chudleigh's *To Clorissa* is through a hierarchy of sources of edification. She begins with books ("th' instructive venerable Dead"), then moves to her friend, who exemplifies "all the Graces of the Female kind," and finally to a union with that friend in heaven. This final verse depends on a conception of inseparability: "We'll live in one another's Breast: / When present, talk the flying Hours away, / When absent, thus, our tender Thoughts convey / . . . / We'll meet again in the blest Realms of Light, / And in each other there eternally delight" (Ezell, 69). Within Chudleigh's essay *Of Solitude* is a poem in which books are called "the Mind's delicious Treat, / Its healthful, most substantial Meat" (387). Even her religious poetry displays delight in reading and striving after learning, as in the following from *The Resolution:* "Smooth *Tillotson* . . . / None ever . . . / . . . with more Clearness each dark Text unfold" (Ezell, 89). This poem mentions an impressive reading list and celebrates what Chudleigh gets from each author; for instance, "*Lucretius* with his Philosophick Strains, / My Mind at once delights,

and entertains" (101). Many of her poems are written in the forms of or as imitations of the texts of the poets, such as Pindar and Lucian, which she praises here.

Henry Vaughan called rural retirement "the *Meek*'s calm region, where / Angels descend, and rule the sphere."[97] So eighteenth-century women found it, and they not only contributed to the evolutions of the retirement poem but also expanded its uses for themselves and for women in the culture. The georgic was already a mixed form, and to it they added distinctively English religious poetry and distinctively female friendship themes, strategies, and language. Like the men, they used retirement poetry to test and assert philosophical positions and, above all, contributed to the movement in serious poetry that would express what nature came to mean:

> Therefore am I still
> A lover of the meadows and the woods,
> And mountains; and of all that we behold
> From this green earth; of all the mighty world
> Of eye and ear, both what they half create
> And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
> In nature and the language of the sense,
> The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
> Of all my moral being.[98]

Very early in this evolution of retirement poetry women treated nature as an aesthetic experience and saw the possibility for a feminine sublime. It would be the 1770s and 1780s before William Cowper led the male rebellion against seeing nature as property and order flowing from the owner. Women's realization of the potential for enjoyment of nature on many experiential levels encouraged the blending of poetic forms and the accompanying original treatment of mainstream ideas.

Above all, retirement poetry was a way for women to explore and express their sensibilities and even identities. By this time, women novelists and dramatists were claiming authority and some autonomy, and the friendship poem had provided such a space for women, one that combining it with the retirement poem expanded. Because these poems were more interior, designed for self-reflection and movement toward a philosophy of the contented life, they demanded a

speaking subject. Elizabeth Carter's 1738 untitled poem beginning "Whate'er we think on't, Fortune's but a Toy" summarizes this oft-repeated idea:

> . . . true Contentment dwells only in the Mind.
> Those Joys on no external Aid depend,
> But in our selves begin, and there must end.
> From Virtue only those Delights must flow,
> Which neither Wealth nor Titles can bestow.[99]

"Since the act of retirement implies a denunciation of all accepted authorities and a firm belief in the powers of the individual to establish [her] own way of life, a strengthening of individualistic attitudes would necessarily be the first link in the chain of events leading to such a denunciation," Marie Røstvig wrote.[100] Many of the women who wrote these poems—Carter, Chapone, Dixon—were leisured and single or widowed early, but even they sought a freedom from conduct-book proscriptions and society's expectations. They conceived freedom very differently from the way men did, and constructing an identity and a "way of life" was a very different endeavor for them. Yet, by writing formal retirement poems, they were buying into an aesthetic and an ideological model, one that not only was self-fashioning but also contributed to the hegemonic movement toward self-conscious nationhood.[101] The poetic identity and sensibility that became inseparable from retreat have much in common with the intellect and sensibility of the perspective of women's retirement poetry.

John Sitter argues that it was in the 1740s "that poetry, if it is to be 'pure poetry' should be about a lonely poet surrounded by 'nature,'—an idea . . . inherited today by almost any beginning writer of verse."[102] The women were also seeking to be "pure mind," but they were creating a new way to be social beings. Retirement offered them communication between free and equal beings. They walked beside a friend, and they were equal to everyone else before God. Men's poetry became more like theirs. As the reasons for retiring from the city, commercial striving, and political ambition became generally accepted, men's poems began to explore humankind's relationships with other people and God's creatures. As time passed, then, inclusion of political elements decreased, and the importance of nature and an individual sensibility increased. In this transitional moment and out of diverse poetic kinds, the retirement poem provided a theme and a subject that women adapted from what men were doing and then passed along greatly enriched.[103]

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Elegy

> The last century was particularly distinguished
> by the elegant effusions of *female genius.*
> — REVIEW OF ANNA SEWARD'S *Poetical Works*

The poets of the last quarter of the eighteenth century included women whose literary achievements are still recognized, even if their works are seldom read. A few critics call their time, as Paula Feldman and Daniel Robinson do, "the first period of literary history in which women poets showed that they could match skills with male poets in an arena earlier closed to them."[1] Among the women are Mary Whateley Darwall, Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Ann Yearsley, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Clara Reeve, Susannah Harrison, Elizabeth Hands, Helen Maria Williams, Hannah More, Anna Seward, Joanna Baillie, Amelia Opie, Anne Bannerman, Eliza Tuite, and the Falconer sisters, Harriet and Maria. Many of them seem to have come early to the realization that they could have a literary career, and some, especially Anna Seward, came to believe that they had the right to be arbiters of taste.[2] Among poets, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Clara Reeve, and Joanna Baillie were also formidable critics. Some felt free to express considerable ambition, as Clara Reeve did in *The Praise of Shakespeare:* "I will study thy immortal works, / Till I transcribe from nature and from thee, / A work of fancy that the world shall own, / True offspring of the great original."[3]

The population of Great Britain in 1780 is estimated at 9.4 million, and

London's would reach only about nine hundred thousand by the end of the century.[4] The literary community was compact, and many of the women poets knew one another. Helen Maria Williams knew Frances Burney, Charlotte Smith, Amelia Opie, and Mary Wollstonecraft,[5] and she corresponded with Anna Seward. Mary Robinson attended Hannah More's Bristol academy. As in the earlier generations, some close friendships and supportive relationships encouraged the women's work. Williams, for instance, dedicated one of her major, long poems, *Peru*, to Elizabeth Montagu, and in *An Ode on the Peace* she devoted a verse to her: "Where eloquence and wit entwine / Their attic wreath around her shrine."[6] More complimented a number of them in her *Sensibility: An Epistle to the Honourable Mrs. Boscawen* (1830) in lines like these: "With Carter trace the wit to Athens known" and "Nor *Barbauld*, shall my glowing heart refuse / Its tribute to thy virtues, or thy Muse: / . . . / The Poet's chaplet for thy brow to twine, / My verse thy talents to the world shall teach, / And praise the genius it despairs to reach" (lines 47, 59–64). Some of them saw themselves enlisted in the same causes. Williams's *Ode on the Peace* includes a tribute to Seward's *Monody on the unfortunate Major André* (1781), a poem about the hanging of a British spy by the Americans, and Williams's *Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave Trade* (1788) helped inspire poems by Hannah More and Ann Yearsley. In fact, most of these women wrote abolitionist verse, and many were recruited to the cause by men as prominent in it as Josiah Wedgewood and William Wilberforce. Many express a longing for the friendship and conversation of other women writers, as Mary Robinson's letter to Elizabeth Gunning after the death of her mother does. "Would the aids of Books, music, conversation and affectionate attentions . . . in the smallest degree alienate your mind from the severity of filial regret?" she asks. Eliza Fenwick, and other writers described Robinson's home as "elegant & quiet" and distinguished by good conversations about writing and culture (Pascoe, 43, 35–36).

These women wrote with energy and confidence. Beside Samuel Johnson's and Oliver Goldsmith's dozen superb poems, Cowper's and Shenstone's few influential poems, the early work of Blake, Crabbe, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, the forgeries of Chatterton and MacPherson, and the work of men such as James Beattie, William Bowles, and Thomas Russell stand far more numerous excellent poems by at least a dozen talented, successful, prolific women. Not only did they contribute to shaping the landscape of British poetry, but they transformed entire genres of poetry and, incidentally, the conception of "woman writer." In Stuart Curran's words:

> Thus, while Goldsmith was writing his two poems and Beattie his one . . . [there were] Anna Barbauld with five editions of her poems between 1773 and 1777; Hannah More with six sizable volumes of verse between 1773 and 1786; . . . Helen Maria Williams, who capitalized on the fame of her first two books of poetry by publishing a collected *Poems, in Two Volumes* in 1786, when she was yet twenty-four; and Mary Robinson, whose first poetic volume was published in 1775, and who the year before her death in 1800 could survey a literary landscape and see it dominated by women intellectuals [in her *Thoughts on the Condition of Women*].[7]

The contributions of these women to literary history are vast. They were important contributors to a major neoclassical project. As John Butt notes, "To Gray, as much as to Pope, the incentive of writing in a classical form was to make that form a denizen of England," and one of the most remarkable feats of the second half of the century was the successful effort to make classical poetic forms become, in Howard Weinbrot's words, "so British that even Greek relicts take the native hue."[8] Women contributed greatly to this project. They made poetry again a force in debates in the public political sphere, and if that contributed to their being forgotten,[9] it was a price worth paying to renew the significance of poetry in the culture. An achievement that rivals this one is their part in revitalizing and developing genres that fired the great Romantic poetry movement of their old age.

Almost every poet named here could be treated as Finch was in chapter 2. Unfortunately, they are represented in current anthologies by a few poems, often arbitrarily or ideologically chosen. Largely unnoticed are influential poems in the popular forms of the day and major poems written as part of the endeavor that all true Poets undertake: to write aesthetically and technically superb poems in the most respected forms and to create original forms and important new uses for poetry. Notably, after Finch and her generation, women poets made significant contributions to almost every classical and English form and were major participants in the development and popularizing of four genres of great importance to literary history. The ode, the elegy, the sonnet, and the metrical tale all attracted rich, *disciplined* experimentation, and women left a legacy of distinctive achievement before the great male Romantic poets practiced these forms. As a concluding illustration of the contributions of women poets to mainstream literary history, I discuss two of these forms, the elegy in this chapter and the sonnet in the next, with primary attention to the work of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Mary Whateley Darwall, Charlotte Smith, and Anna Seward. The present chapter

includes a survey of representative poems in the major forms of the eighteenth-century elegy, a comparison of the work of two major composers of the elegy, a close study of same-sex desire in the elegies of a single poet, and finally, a brief introduction to the blending of elements from the elegy into popular metrical tales.

What Did Women Write?

The ode and the elegy were the great classical forms embraced and renewed by midcentury poets. The elegy, rather than exclusively a poem lamenting an individual's death, as we think of it today, had several distinctive forms, including the lament, the memorial, the pastoral, the classical (which included love elegies), and the English contemplative. As this chapter shows, women wrote elegies in all of these forms. As John Draper, author of the monumental *Funeral Elegy and the Rise of English Romanticism*, wrote, "Indeed, of miscellaneous elegists, and miscellaneous elegies, and miscellaneous poems that approximate or borrow from the elegiac form, the reign of George II is full to abundance."[10] By the end of the century the elegy was one of the three or four most popular forms of poetry, and the elegiac mode had penetrated almost every form. The revolution in taste can be marked by, for example, a preference for Pope's *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* over his satires[11] and the interpenetration of georgic themes and imagery into elegies, which strengthened their public significance and assured the form's continued relevance in a time of strife at home and abroad. With good reason Abbi Potts called the nineteenth "the elegiac century."[12]

Elegy originally referred not to genre or content but to the verse form, the elegiac distich. The true elegiac stanza is composed of couplets alternating hexameters and pentameters; the Greeks let them flow from line to line, but the Romans closed the couplet. As Edward Michael says, "Rhythmically, the two lines of an elegiac couplet have different tenors. The long hexameter readily lends itself to a narrative-descriptive aspect, while the somewhat shorter pentameter, with its halting caesura at the middle of the line, is ideally suited to a reflective-contemplative aspect."[13] The standard illustration of the meter is Coleridge's translation of Schiller's couplet: "In the hexameter rises the fountain's silvery column, / In the pentameter aye [ever] falling in melody back."[14] By the seventeenth century, English poets had come to prefer and defend quatrains, their "elegiac stanza." The "heroic quatrain," iambic pentameter lines rhyming *abab*, became associated with the English elegy, the best-known example being Gray's *Elegy in a Country Church-Yard.* Samuel Johnson quoted Dryden as identi-

fying the heroic quatrain as "the most magnificent of all the measures which our language affords."[15] The elegy can also be traced through a line of British poems that are brooding meditations on the brevity of life, beginning with *The Wanderer* and *The Pearl*, and Gray's *Elegy* falls within this tradition as well. Women wrote all of the kinds of elegies that men did, and most of our modern criticism could be applied to their work.

As demonstrated in chapter 5, they wrote many simple elegies about the loss of friends and of others in their private circles. Elizabeth Rowe's *On the Death of Mr. Thomas Rowe* is well known, and poems such as Jane Brereton's *On the Death of Mrs. Mary Bennet*, Elizabeth Tollet's *Adieu my Friend!* and Mary Jones's *Verses to the Memory of Miss Clayton* are high-quality representatives of this largely private poetry. Samuel Johnson wrote in his "Essay on Epitaphs" that "Nature and Reason have dictated to every Nation, that to preserve good Actions from Oblivion, is both the Interest and Duty of Mankind."[16] Women understood this, and such poems are especially interesting because they were written at a time when the definitions of "good woman" and ideal female conduct were being reconsidered and, in fact, renegotiated obsessively.[17] These largely private elegies go beyond individual friendship to offer unusual access to what women felt deserved preservation and, therefore, fulfill traditional functions of elegies within a society. For instance, Anna Seward's *To the Memory of Lady Millar* praises the virtues that Anne, Lady Miller, enforced by her life and social practices as she presided over poetic assemblies at Batheaston:

> With high-soul'd pleasures, and ingenuous truth,
> 'Twas thine to nurse the hopes of young Renown;
> 'Twas thine to elevate the views of youth;
> To look, with calm disdain, superior down
> On Pride's cold frown, and Fashion's pointed leer;
> On Envy's serpent lie, and Folly's apish sneer.
>
> (Scott, 2:154)

At these gatherings poets were invited to put poems on designated subjects in an antique Etruscan vase. Many of the topics were predictable personifications; for instance, Seward won for her *Charity*. Other topics were surprising; Seward also won for her poem on the Pythagorean system. The submissions were read by "gentlemen judges," three contestants were selected to receive myrtle garlands, and collections of the best were published.[18] Miller's distinctive legacy was that she set and united social with literary standards. Seward enthusiastically admired the fact that Miller donated the profits from the published collections to her

husband's charity for the poor, as she would idolize William Hayley's benevolence toward William Blake and William Cowper. Seward goes on to describe Miller as the exemplary daughter, nursing her ailing parent, and the ideal wife and mother. Much of the elegy is about poetry and the poets who flocked to Batheaston, but the poem ends with a tribute to Miller in her traditional, womanly roles—friend, daughter, wife, and mother. Miller died in 1781, and Seward was selected to write the epitaph for her monument in the Abbey Church at Bath, a sign of the growing recognition of Seward as one of the first poets of the land and the pride of the Batheaston circle. She understood the role of the public poet, and her epitaph, in elegiac quatrains, echoes both Pope and Gray:

> O, gentle Stranger! may one generous tear
> Drop, as thou bendest o'er this hallow'd earth!
>
> Are truth, and science, love, and pity thine,
> With liberal charity and faith sincere?
> Then rest thy wandering step beneath this shrine,
> And greet a kindred Spirit hovering near!
>
> (Scott, 2:183)

Women also could rise to excellence in paying tribute to more famous public figures. Elizabeth Tollet's *On the Death of Sir Isaac Newton* is a learned summary of Newton's contributions to science that places him on the list of the greatest scientists. Some of her comparisons are cleverly suited to the subject: "*Bacon* and *Boyle* thy Triumphs but fore-run, / As Phosphor rises to precede the Sun."[19] Charlotte Smith's Sonnet XXXII, *To melancholy. Written on the banks of the Arun, October 1785*, can be read as an elegy for Thomas Otway, by then an iconic figure of literary creativity, "next to Shakespeare."[20] Mary Jones's *In Memory of the Rt. Hon. Lord Aubrey Beauclerk, Who was slain at Carthagena* blends the public and private brilliantly.[21] In the opening of a representative verse, she writes,

> What dreadful slaughter on the western coast!
> How many gallant warriors *Britain* lost,
> A *British* muse would willingly conceal;
> But what the muse would hide, our tears reveal.

She makes it clear that the loss is the nation's: "In all that health and energy of youth, / Which promis'd honours of maturer growth." While fully acknowledging Beauclerk's family's national importance and his personal sacrifice on a public occasion, she addresses her private friend and what the death meant to the young wife:

He fell! — His country lost her earliest boast;
His family a faithful guardian lost;
His friend a safe companion; and his wife,
Her last resource, her happiness in life.

The sequence and these thoughts are conventional, but the poem goes on to ask the usual questions more bluntly than most elegies: "Say, what is Life? and wherefore was it giv'n? / What the design, the purpose mark'd by Heav'n?" The second half of the poem begins, "Virtue! — What is it?" and this parallel question to "what is Life" proves to be more important and more eloquently explicated. Both dignity and compassion characterize these verses that continue to balance the public figure and the private man in smooth, flowing heroic couplets. Jones's poem ends with the mention of the Westminster Abbey epitaph written by Edward Young. Gray's *Elegy* would end with an epitaph, and Jones would have known that most of the broadside elegies since the Commonwealth concluded with an epitaph.[22]

Women remained deeply concerned and informed about Great Britain's heroes, and they wrote other poems as good as this one. Donald Reiman ranks Amelia Opie's *Elegy to the Memory of the Late Duke of Bedford* (1802) with Spenser's *Astrophel*, Arnold's *Thyrsus*, and Auden's *In Memory of W. B. Yeats* "as an integrated and moving poetic expression not only of grief and regret at the death of an admired contemporary but also of a philosophy of human values and their relationship to the life and death of the memorialized individual."[23] Robinson uses her theatrical experience and personal acquaintance in *Monody on the Death of Mr. Garrick*. There is an alertness and breadth to her mind, an ability to make connections, and a gift for recognizing implications that is quite unusual. In several verses she discusses Garrick's part in establishing Shakespeare as the national poet, and she uses her knowledge of his burial at the foot of the Shakespeare monument in Westminster Abbey to good effect:

And tho' no laurel'd bust, or labour'd line,
  Shall bid the passing stranger stay to weep,
Thy SHAKSPERE's hand shall point the hallow'd shrine,
  And Britain's genius with thy ashes sleep.

In other lines she captures Garrick's distinguished acting skills:

Who can forget thy penetrating eye,
  The sweet bewitching smile, th' empassion'd look?

> The clear deep whisper, the persuasive sigh,
> The feeling tear that Nature's language spoke?[24]

In this last line she invokes the culture's opinion of Garrick, thereby providing epithet and epitaph in their shared vernacular.

Perhaps the first woman poet to accept herself as an intellectual equal to her male peers, Elizabeth Carter, wrote such a poem on Elizabeth Rowe that included the lines, "A loss to no one private breast confined, / But claims the general sorrow of mankind."[25] She is claiming Rowe to be a Poet and exemplum for humankind even as she recognizes her as an enabling model, a poet whose range, poetic mastery, and willingness to publish began a line of modern women poets. Elegies for poets provided good places for critical observations. Among Clara Reeve's poems on poets and poetry is *On the Death of [Charles] Churchill. In imitation of his stile*. She begins with an image suited to the kind of moral satires for which she praises him:

> Churchill is dead, his laurel'd head laid low,
> His dart unpointed, and unbent his bow.
> Who shall assay that wond'rous bow to bend,
> Or who those feather'd weapons aim to send?
> Satire now sleeps till the true heir appears.[26]

Like many elegies, hers quickly turns to the high calling and moral, patriotic responsibility of the poet. Churchill, whose death in 1764 had inspired more elegies than Gray's would in 1771, had publicly challenged authors to write satire that monitored public affairs and the conduct of statesmen and other public figures. He claimed a place in Pope's family by echoing his lines to express the poet's duty: "Bade Pow'r turn pale, kept mighty rogues in awe, / And made them fear the Muse, who fear'd not Law."[27] Reeve, who often expressed unusually forthright ambitions,[28] concludes,

> Oh cou'd I this degen'rate age rehearse,
> In Pope's keen lays, or Churchill's manly verse!
> Then shou'd my arm the pond'rous bow sustain,
> And not one pointed shaft shou'd fly in vain.
> (68)

Reeve was a student of literary history and of what she and others would call the progress of English poetic language and style. In *The Praise of Dryden* she had

repeated his accepted, highest achievement. "Hail Dryden, polisher of English verse," she begins. This tribute is primarily interesting for her artful versifying of critical opinion:

> Great are thy faults, but glorious is thy flame.
> Thou took'st the rugged ore from the rich mine,
> In fancy's glowing furnace to refine.
>
> (73)

Of Shakespeare she wrote, "Hail greatest master of the English tongue! / Thou mad'st the language bend beneath thy strength, / Proud to express thy vast conceptions!" (70). Churchill is the heir to the mighty weapons of satire, and her heroic couplets contrast to the more musical and flowing elegiac quatrains that her contemporaries were using but underscore the subjects and prosody of the models and lineage she praises.

Women also played with the form for the amusement of their friends and themselves. Mary Jones's richly allusive, half-consoling *Elegy, On a favourite* DOG, *suppos'd to be poison'd* is a witty mock elegy. It calls upon all the dogs, but chiefly those who "Lie on [ladies'] laps, or wait upon their chair," to mourn Sparky. Reveling in mock bathos, the poet proclaims that Sparky was "Dogs, parrots, squirrels, monkeys, beaus and all! / For thou wert all those tender names in one; / That thou could'st yet survive! — but thou art gone."[29] Susanna Blamire's *Written in a Churchyard, On seeing a Number of Cattle Grazing in it* (1766) includes these hilarious if, as she says, profane parodic images:

> Within this place of consecrated trust
> The neighbouring herds their daily pasture find;
> And idly bounding o'er each hallow'd bust,
> Form a sad prospect to the pensive mind.
> Whilst o'er the grave thus carelessly they tread,
> Allur'd by hunger to the deed profane,
> They crop the verdure rising from the bed
> Of some fond parent, or some love-sick swain.[30]

Women attempted pastoral elegies, and many of their adaptations of it are good poetry and, perhaps more interesting for us today, insights into how genres are gendered and used by people in different situations from those of the canonical writers of such poems. In fact, among elegies written by women there are far fewer good pastoral elegies than good elegies of any other type, and as the

English elegy absorbed more themes from the imperialistic georgic there were even fewer. Laments for the dead in pastoral elegies such as *Lycidas* were very much "dominated by the drive towards succession and self-placing, and the construction of heroic genealogies."[31] In fact, many elegies were written in such a way as to establish the greatness of the author; by placing themselves first and as the real subject of the poem, poets positioned themselves among the immortals. In Celeste Schenck's unsympathetic view, the formal, pastoral elegy was "from its inception . . . a resolutely patriarchal genre: a song sung over the bier of a friend-forebear in order both to lay the ancestor to rest and to seize the pipes of pastoral poetry from his barely cold hands."[32] In fact, the elegist is often already the superior poet and shows that he knows it. Ann Messenger argues that the "intense professionalism" of pastoral elegy, with its many conventions, including a meditation on "the craft of poetry itself," was "awkward" for women.[33] As Donald Mell says, elegies, especially pastoral ones, are " 'literary,' highly artificial in style and conventional in feeling and form,"[34] and women have sometimes been uncomfortable assuming such a posture.

Many forms of the elegy were especially inharmonious for women. Peter Sacks rightly calls attention to women's "difficulty in identifying with predominantly male symbols of consolation" and to the "hitherto largely unasked question of how differently men and women mourn." What he does not emphasize adequately is that eighteenth-century male poets, by appropriating melancholy as the mood of male suffering over loss and identifying it with creativity, contributed to the establishment over time of gendered judgments of mourners. Women who mourned as these male poets did would be labeled depressed, distraught, and neurotic. Jahan Ramazani hypothesizes that women's vexed relationship with elegy continues into the modern period, especially as grief has been increasingly "feminized": "For them, the genre was doubly problematic in gender terms—'masculine' as an élite literary form yet 'feminine' as a popular cultural form and simulation of mourning."[35] Indeed, John Draper contemptuously states that the poetic funeral elegy became the property of "the women, the middle classes, and the provincials."[36] At the same time, elegies such as Gray's *Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West* not only developed the theme of homoerotic loss in the elegiac tradition but also, as Esther Schor argues, asserted that "we learn how to grieve from the poets," from "fathers."[37] In higher forms, as Sacks argues, the association of death, castration, and impotency in elegies by men are identifications obviously alien to women.[38] Like young, sacrificed fertility gods, John Oldham and Richard West, in elegies by Dryden and Gray, fail to reach their poetic power

and, therefore, their ability to "father" influential poetry. Part of the awkwardness of Clara Reeve's poems on earlier poets comes from her uneasy language about lineage and inheritance, and the most successful public elegies by women do something similar to what Jones does in her lament that Beauclerk's death has robbed both his wife and his country of heirs.

The variety of the following pastoral elegies by women does suggest their authors familiarity with the form. Mary Robinson's *Pastoral Elegy*, for instance, is one of the many that creates a portrait of the ideal man, one who "scorn'd to deceive or betray."[39] Elizabeth Thomas, who wrote several pastoral elegies, attempted to give a woman friend the kind of tribute male poets had given friends in *A Pastoral Elegy, To the Memory of Her dear Friend the Honourable Mrs. Ceciliee Bew*, as did Elizabeth Tollet in the better *Pastoral in Memory of Mrs. Elizabeth Blackler, 1717*. Mary Chudleigh's *On the Death of His Highness the Duke of Glocester* includes most of the pastoral elegy's conventions, including the nightingale's song, numerous personifications, and grieving nymphs, shepherds, and Nereids. Even Britannia appears to promise a brighter day. Her elegy, however, concludes, not with consolation, but with a surprisingly intimate verse, one that turns away from the Muse to "my lov'd Princess," whose grief seems inconsolable and immediate to the poet, who had also lost children to death.[40] The final image, then, is of two mothers far apart in rank and situation but identical in a grief that cannot be touched by anything the elegy form offers. Finch's *Elegy on the Death of K[ing] James* takes similar personal turns. There is a verse devoted to Mary of Modena's grief, and the private woman and the public queen are united in the final line, "Strong are the Bonds of Death, but stronger those of Love." Evidence survives that lines canceled or destroyed related James's private life to his public character and heroism.[41] Closer to royalty than Chudleigh, Finch writes, "But Royal *James*, who never shall Return / To Chear those Hearts, which did thy Sorrows Mourn, / Who never shall the Woes, the Wants repair, / Which for thy sake, have been thy Followers share." The Finches experienced those woes and wants in the most basic domestic deprivations, as well as in public humiliations and dangers.[42]

Both the pious and the skeptical in the eighteenth century brooded over death. At one end of the spectrum are people like the fervent Rowe and the awed Samuel Johnson, and at the other, those who thought, if they did not speak, about death, as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu did:

> Say, then, does the unbodied spirit fly
> To happier climes and to a better sky;
> Or sinking, mixes with its kindred clay,

> And sleep a whole eternity away?
> Or shall this form be once again renewed,
> With all its frailties and its hopes endued,
> Acting once more on this detested stage
> Passions of youth, infirmities of age?
> (Lonsdale, 68)

But more is at work here. Historically, the elegy has had special appeal during times when poets have felt the need to address loss and mourning and to respond to feelings of psychological and social threat.[43] The eighteenth was a century of revolutionary change in lifestyles, values, and global position, and it came to be one of image-changing wars and loss of life. Even its aesthetic values were changing so rapidly as to be inchoate. At such times, experimentation and adaptation are especially rich, and the elegy was an ideal form for the times of cultural uncertainty and mourning. The difficult pastoral elegy and the common funeral elegy never lost favor, but there was new interest in the form as practiced by the earliest Greek elegists and carried on by the Romans. Second in antiquity only to the epic, the elegy "was the vehicle not only for passing emotions but for considered ideas."[44] The ethical standards of Greek culture animated the elegies and gave them lasting historical as well as artistic interest. The Greeks Callinus and Tyrtaeus used it to celebrate military heroism, and Solon explained his political principles in the form. An exhortatory element seems to have been common, as the former encouraged heroics in battle and the latter urged the Athenians to reconciliation.[45] Many elegies were written for banquets and competitions, and a number of poets used the form for moral advice. In Greece and Rome the elegy was a serious, reflective, dignified poem with love and war the most common subjects.[46] Mary Leapor's *Beauties of the Spring* is a lovely, formal elegy in this tradition and infinitely appropriate to her own time: "In those still Groves no martial Clamours sound, / No streaming Purple stains the guiltless Ground."[47] The poem moves melodiously between the secluded, romantic "friends" and the hints of war, strife, and poverty beyond their grove.

Many of the classical elegies have autobiographical elements; in a wonderful summary of the form, Archilochus wrote, "I am the servant of the Lord of War, / And I know too the Muses' lovely gift."[48] Sappho wrote them, and the Roman poets Gallus, Catullus, Ovid, and Tibullus created the genre of the erotic or love elegy. In contrast to the pastoral elegy, which was "among the most formalized of poetic kinds" and tended to transform "warm emotion into cold art, thus inviting charges of insincerity,"[49] these elegies often shocked with their raw descriptions

of events and personal feelings. One of Sappho's suggests what women can do with the form, gendering death and its terrors:

> We put the urn aboard ship
> with this inscription:
>
> This is the dust of little Timas who unmarried was led
> into Persephone's dark bedroom
>
> And she being far from home, girls
> her age took new-edged blades
> to cut, in mourning for her,
> these curls of their soft hair[50]

Like Ovid, Tibullus was a great love poet: "Yours is the face I would see, my last hour upon me; / yours is the hand I would hold, talisman and touchstone."[51] In Margaret Cavendish's competition of the poets, *The Purchase of Poets* (1664), Fame decides the contest based on the number of friends who will "be bound" that their candidate has the most wit, and Tibullus's slot is firm: "*Tibullus*, *Venus* and her Son did bring" (line 35). Her lines are in harmony with Ovid's "As long as there are fires and bows, the weapons of Cupid, your verses, elegant Tibullus, will be studied."[52] Women's poetry contains numerous such characterizing references to Tibullus. In her comic renunciation of poetry, Sydney Owenson, later Lady Morgan, writes, "No sweet impassion'd strain of fire, / Breath'd from the chords of Sappho's lyre, / Nor Ovid's, nor Tibullus' lay."[53]

During the years when the elegy was one of the most popular forms, imitations of Tibullus proliferated. After he was rediscovered in the Renaissance along with Catullus and Propertius, numerous editions of his work and references to him spread his influence, and modern criticism has established that Tibullus and Propertius were the most influential among the classical elegists.[54] Herrick, for example, pays tribute to Tibullus along with Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Catullus, and Propertius and uses him as the emblem of his theme in "To live merrily, and to trust to Good Verses." The Renaissance poets, however, picked up the rhythm and reflective mood of the Tibullus who often seems haunted by death. In Elegy 1.3, for instance, Tibullus writes, "Death with your greedy hands, Death, black Death, hold off! / Hold off, black Death, I beg; my mother is far away; / She cannot gather my burned bones to her grieving breast" (*Poems*, 40). Poetry is well known to be the most allusive and intertextual of genres, and the following poem by Herrick illustrates the transmission of conventional associations from Ovid to

Herrick to Hannah More. "Text" in line 3 refers to the lines translated from Ovid's *Amores* that compose the next verse.

> Now, to *Tibullus*, next,
> This flood I drink to thee
> But stay; I see a Text,
> That this presents to me.
>
> Behold, *Tibullus* lies
> Here burnt, whose smal return
> Of ashes, scarce suffice
> To fill a little Urne.
>
> Trust to good Verses then;
> They onely will aspire,
> When Pyramids, as men,
> Are lost, i' th' funerall fire.
>
> And when all Bodies meet
> In *Lethe* to be drown'd;
> Then onely Numbers sweet,
> With endless life are crown'd.[55]

More's *Sensibility: An Epistle to the Honourable Mrs. Boscawen* employs the same Ovidian reference: "You, who with pensive Petrarch, love to mourn, / Or weave the garland for Tibullus' urn."[56] These lines capture Boscawen's learned appreciation of the kind of poetry Tibullus wrote and continue the line of poetry that reflects on human mortality and art's transcendence.

In contrast, the eighteenth-century poets emphasized the Tibullus who wrote about love and the rural life, and his popularity grew.[57] They found him "as tender as Catullus, as passionate as Propertius" but writing with "a greater simplicity in theme, diction and tone."[58] He was one of Richard West's favorite poets, and there is no question that Gray knew the Latin poet well. One of West's best poems is his version of Book 3, Elegy 5, one of the elegies in the so-called Messalla collection.[59] Dodsley published examples such as George Lyttleton's *Part of an Elegy of Tibullus, Translated.*[60] James Hammond identified his *Love Elegies* (1743) as adaptations of Tibullus, and some of them were excellent models for later poets. Elegy XI, for instance, paraphrases part of Tibullus's Elegy 1.10, which contrasts war and the inventor of the sword ("What man, what devil, first

conceived the sword? / shaper of iron, himself an iron heart, / begetter of battles on an innocent world" [*Poems*, 61]) with the Goddess of Peace, who taught humankind to yoke oxen and use plowshares, not weapons.[61] At the end of the century, Rebecca Manners's *Review of Poetry* pays Hammond tribute and summarizes the standard opinion of Tibullus:

> Soft in elegiac strains
> Fond Tibullus' muse complains:
> With no vain ambition fraught,
> He nor wealth nor honours sought,
> Scorning mid a courtly train
> Even the imperial smile to gain.
> Native energy and fire
> In Propertius' lays conspire,
> While his fixed and ardent flame
> Gives to Cynthia lasting fame.
> In despairing Hammond's lines
> With new grace Tibullus shines.[62]

Shenstone, who was a favorite of many women poets and another important popularizer of this kind of elegy, argued in "Elegies in Hammond's Meter" (wr. c. 1743, pub. 1764) that the elegy should include personal feelings and responses.[63] His Elegy I praised sincerity and insisted that good poetry "flows from the heart," and the Earl of Chesterfield agreed in his preface to Hammond's *Love Elegies*, which summarizes educated, popular opinion about Tibullus's and ideal elegies:

> But sincere in his Love as in his Friendship, he wrote to his Mistresses, as he spoke to his Friends, nothing but the true genuine Sentiments of his Heart . . . 'twas Nature, and Sentiment only that dictated to a real Mistress, not youthful and poetic Fancy, to an imaginary one. Elegy therefore speaks here her own, proper, native Language, the unaffected, plaintive Language of the tender Passions; the true Elegiac Dignity and Simplicity are preserved and united, the one without Pride, the other without Meanness. *Tibullus* seems to have been the Model, our Author judiciously preferred to Ovid; the former writing directly from the Heart to the Heart, the latter too often yielding, and addressing himself to the Imagination. He admired . . . that noble Simplicity of Thought and Expression. . . ; but he rever'd that Love of their Country, that Contempt of Riches, that Sacredness of Friendship.[64]

These are the terms in which Tibullus's elegies were consistently praised and for which they were imitated.

For a war-weary nation like Great Britain, his sonorous reflections on the true meaning of war were deeply moving. In Elegy 1.10, he asks, "Are we mad, to give dark death such invitation? / He is close enough in peace; he comes by stealth; / in his kingdom are only Cerberus and Charon, / no vineyards, no fields, to bring a harvest's wealth" (*Poems*, 62). Tibullus's elegies often juxtapose the satisfactions of rural life and descriptions of war, love, and betrayal. He treats labor realistically, and his affinity for the melancholy tone made his work especially congenial for poets after 1740.

Just as earlier women wrote paraphrases and imitations of Horace and Ovid, later poets paraphrased and imitated Tibullus. Mary Darwall, for instance, paraphrased Tibullus's Elegy 3.3, actually written by Lygdamus in the circle of Messalla, notably a circle that included a woman poet. The theme is summarized in the line, "The gift of kings I scorn, deprived of thee," thus one of Tibullus's signature themes. Her first eight lines are close to a literal translation, and then she introduces a pastoral lover, Philander, and writes freely. Among the lines she adds are,

> Ye tuneful *Nine*, my tender Breast inspire,
> With *Sapphic* Art to wake the plausive Lyre;
> O hear thy suppliant Handmaid, Queen of Charms,
> And bring my Lover to my longing Arms![65]

Rather courageously, she maintains the Greek elegist's desire for death if "the cruel *Fates*" deny the lovers' union. Darwall's use of the old-fashioned but dignified heroic couplets and the pastoral rather than contemplative mode suggests that she was experimenting freely with the pastoral mode. Her title, however, *Imitation of the Third Elegy of the Third Book of Tibullus*, indicates the broad interest in his work and that she was following the poetry fads of her time.

Anna Laetitia Barbauld illustrates a different kind of engagement with Tibullus. She was the carefully educated daughter of the Dissenting minister John Aikin, who became the classics tutor at Warrington Academy, a Dissenting academy in Lancashire. Her first book, *Poems* (1773), was universally praised; her essays were compared favorably to Addison's and Johnson's; and her reputation was such that Coleridge walked forty miles to meet her. Critics today often express what can only be described as wonder at her achievements and her neglect. John Guillory notes that she produced a fifty-volume edition of British

novelists and later what he calls a companion volume for women as part of his presentation of "her impeccable credentials in literary culture." William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft point out that she would have been "on anybody's short list" of the leading British writers of her day and argue that she "can claim to be considered a founder of British Romanticism."[66] Her poetry shows what Elizabeth Kraft has called a "distinct lightness of touch amid allusive erudition,"[67] and her uses of her knowledge of Tibullus fit that description well. In fact, the kinds of inspirations she draws from Tibullus are representative of the best poetic practices of the time. Her *Delia. An Elegy* (1773) is a dramatization of Tibullus's fantasy of what could never be from Elegy 1.5: "A little house, and Delia watching over." "Such tales I told myself," he wrote (*Poems*, 46–48). This kind of adaptation of segments of classics was a popular amusement, and Barbauld follows his pattern of imagining characters' daily lives. In some lines she is very close to his. He imagines, "the servants' baby she'll teach, and talk to it, and dry its tears," and Barbauld writes that Delia "shall lend her modest aid." She reworks his "by fair shoulders, queenly charms, / And golden locks" and "your soft hair loosely caught" as the best lines in her poem:

> The simple knot shall bind her gather'd hair,
> The russet garment clasp her lovely breast;
> DELIA shall mix among the rural fair,
> By charms alone distinguish'd from the rest.

It is clear that Barbauld had picked up that Delia was blonde, the hair color associated with the blessing of ripe grain in classical literature extending back to Homer, and from a higher class than Tibullus.

Written in elegiac quatrains, the poem idealizes Delia and their love, as Tibullus's brief dream had. In both, Delia is faithful, willing to marry him and share "the shepherd's lowly life." Barbauld also echoes Tibullus's Elegies 1.1 and 2.1,[68] but in content and language many of the lines are utterly conventional late-eighteenth-century: "our silent hours shall steal unmark'd away / In one long tender calm of rural peace." Some are the worst of conventional personification, such as, "meek Simplicity, neglected maid." Tibullus, appreciated for the simplicity and straightforwardness of his verse, is a source of inspiration more than primary model. As was conventional, Barbauld modernizes a bit, and her Delia reads with him and stakes broken lilies, while Tibullus's women are weavers, serious contributors to the domestic economy: "quick, in the way of women, to weigh and card and comb, / using distaff and spindle spun between finger and

thumb— / Minerva's faithful servants . . ." (*Poems*, 66). Barbauld's epigraph is from Elegy 3.3, another elegy condemning riches and praising the simple life, and her editors translate the lines, "That through long years of life I might share my joys with thee, and that in thine arms might drop my aged frame" (M&K, 265). Like Darwall, Barbauld attributes the elegy to Tibullus.

Delia is the name Barbauld gives Elizabeth Belsham Kenrick, the addressee of *The Invitation*, who is invited to choose the country over the "idle hurry," "hollow friendships," and "busy cities." She uses an epigraph from Tibullus 2.1 for her *Origin of Song-Writing*, and her poem is an adaptation of part of the poet's song for the rustic festival, which is the subject of the first part of the elegy. In the song, Cupid is part of the song "of the country and country gods," the world before the creation of the sword. Cupid, "the god who breeds desire," "was born . . . of the fields" "Where bull and cow graze and the never-bridled mare" (*Poems*, 66). The next lines are her epigraph: "There in those quiet pastures he aimed his untrained bow: / with hands that have grown in skill" (*Poems*, 66). Tibullus's following sixteen lines illustrate Cupid's powers, which are not always benign: "He makes old men blurt shameful words at an angry wench's door." Barbauld transforms this into a tale in which Venus takes Cupid to be tutored by the Muses. Now Cupid "tunes the Muses lyre," she writes.

> 'Tis love inspires the poet's song:
> Hence Sappho's soft infectious page;
> Monimia's woe; Othello's rage;
> Abandon'd Dido's fruitless prayer;
> And Eloisa's long despair.
>
> (M&K, 48)

Mingling allusions to classical and British art, she makes Cupid a timeless inspiration. Barbauld's character of Martha Jennings was probably written during Jennings's engagement to John Aikin or for their marriage. She begins her compliment and characterization with lines from what was known as *The Matronalia*, *March 1*, Elegy 4.2, actually *The Praise of Sulpicia* from the poems of the circle of Messalla (this one perhaps actually by Tibullus): "Whatever she does, wherever she turns a footstep, / Grace invisibly trails behind and sees that all is proper" (109). The portrait concludes that love is in her "every word, and look," and therefore Tibullus is a fitting source, and Sulpicia, the poet and beautiful, aristocratic subject of book 4 of the elegies, a flattering allusion. Barbauld's knowledge of Tibullus is greater than most women poets', but her appreciation and imitation

of his poems are not at all unusual and represent rather common relationships between women poets and the classical elegy.

Representative Composers: Darwall and Seward

Mary Whateley Darwall and Anna Seward, two talented, very different, and quite remarkable women illustrate what *elegy* meant to the time and the various ways women wrote them, as well as the varying kinds of careers women poets born in the 1730s and 1740s could have. In her biography of Darwall, Ann Messenger describes her as a perfect example of an ordinary middle-class woman, "average" in almost every way. Messenger rightly calls attention to her "great strength of character," her intelligence, and her literary talent.[69] As a youthful reader of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *Spectator*, and other middlebrow publications, she wrote predictable poems. Many of her poems are better than this description suggests; in addition to her books, she published in the most prestigious venues of the century, and John Wesley, for instance, said, "Some of her elegies I think quite equal to Mr. Gray's."[70] She published in six periodicals, including the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and put together a nice collection published in 1764 by Dodsley, who was one of the first to see the commercial advantages of publishing women's poetry. Anna Seward, on the contrary, was a privileged woman, and she became famous because of her elegies. After the publication of *Elegy on Captain Cook* (1780) and especially *Monody on the Death of Major André* (1781), she was the most famous woman poet in England. Called "th' immortal MUSE of Britain," "Our British Muse," and "Queen Muse of Britain," she was a national poet and even "the personification of national identity."[71] She was recognized as a skilled, professional poet; the *Analytical Review*, for instance, described her poetry as "not the hasty effusions of indolent genius, but the finished productions of vigorous fancy and delicate sensibility, under the regulation of a correct taste, and an ear well tutored to harmony."[72] The daughter of the prebendary of Salisbury and canon residentiary of the Lichfield Cathedral, she never married and was a blunt, outspoken, opinionated woman who felt free to berate Samuel Johnson in public. She became a formidable critic and literary presence as well as a tourist site. One enthusiast wrote, "In I ran, impatient to see where genius and poetry had fixed their abode."[73] She took pleasure in the fact that people trekked to see the "Swan of Lichfield" and admitted them to her presence, and late in life she gave more than fifty readings of Gottfried Bürger's *Leonora* in translation to reportedly thrilled listeners.[74] Robert Southey and Sir Walter Scott came to sit before her.

Both Darwall and Seward were attuned to the poetic fashions of their time. Both wrote sentimental lyrics in the styles and on the subjects of their contemporaries, and they experimented with the classical and English forms appearing in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and Dodsley's collections. Seward especially exhibited a fondness for sublime landscapes, but both were skilled descriptive and mood poets. Both were patriotic and wrote poems about important national events: Darwall's *Ode on the Peace* celebrates the heroes of the siege of Gibraltar (1779–83), and Seward's *Ode on General Eliott's Return from Gibraltar, in 1787* praises the governor of Gibraltar, Sir George Eliott. Both joined in romanticizing Scotland in poems about its distant past. Darwall wrote *Down the Bourn* and *Scotch Pastoral*, for instance, and Seward, who never lost her enjoyment of *Ossian*, wrote poems such as *The Ghost of Cuchullin, —from Ossian.* Seward spoke for many poets when she wrote in a letter, "From my earliest youth, Scotland has been to me classic ground."[75] Even the titles of some of these two women's poems suggest their membership in the community of poets. For instance, everyone seemed to be writing minstrel poems, which include Seward's memoir and poem addressed to the "Peak Minstrel," the carpenter William Newton,[76] Darwall's *The Self-Exiled Minstrel* (1794), James Beattie's *The Minstrel* (1771), and Sir Walter Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805).

Unlike the unassuming Darwall, Seward was so sure of her significance that she saved, transcribed, and touched up her correspondence dating from 1784 and left it for Constable to publish, which he did in six volumes in 1811. Also in contrast to Darwall, Seward called attention to her domestic responsibilities, once saying: "With great fondness for literature, my life has been too much devoted to feminine employments to do much more than study, in every short and transient opportunity, but with eager avidity, and intense attention, that science [poetry], the first and fairest."[77] Although she was mistress of the Bishop's Palace and nursed her father with great devotion for years, her life seems easy when set beside Darwall's life of relative poverty and many children. Darwall was rudely turned out of the manse upon her husband's death and occasionally was not sure where she could find a home, while Seward was allowed to live in the Bishop's Palace until her death, some nineteen years after her father's.

Seven out of the thirty-one poems in *Original Poems on Several Occasions by Miss Whateley* (1764), Darwall's first collection, are elegies, and another is a compliment on her friend John Langhorne's book of elegies, *Visions of Fancy* (1762).[78] Only one of Darwall's elegies is in the form of the more familiar funeral or memorial elegy, *Elegy on a much lamented Friend.* It opens with the sound of the church bell and includes most of the pastoral devices. *Elegy written in a Garden* is

the kind of elegy that Shenstone and others helped make fashionable; it praises the retired life and puts popular ideas into serviceable verse like, "Of *Virtue*, which, by *Reason's* Pow'r refin'd, / Smiles at Old Age, and Death itself disarms."[79] This collection ends with *Elegy on the Uses of Poetry, Inscribed to the Rev. Randle Darwall, M.A.* Randle Darwall was her father-in-law; he encouraged her poetry and helped get more than 160 subscribers for the publication of the collection. The poem captures the simple virtues of the Darwall family and insists upon modest ambitions. Its echo of Pope is from *An Essay on Man*, not the satires: "To vindicate the Ways of God to Man, / Soothe *Care*'s deep Gloom, and chear the lonely Hour" (110).

Thirty years later she published her second collection, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1794), and she chose to open volume 2 with the carefully crafted, gothic *Elegy on the Ruins of Kenilworth Castle*. Dedicated to Thomas Villiers, Earl of Clarendon,[80] the poem is infused with historical and Romantic sensibilities that are sometimes conventional and sometimes peculiarly and discriminatingly her own. Again she is in tune with current tastes and draws on many Romantic and gothic fashions. Darwall's experience writing such metrical tales as *William and Susan* contributes to this poem as well and helps transform it into the popular, pseudohistorical and regional tales then so popular. As she recollects the crumbling castle, she carefully establishes a double-visioned scene, her reflections moving between the time of Queen Elizabeth I and her own:

> Resolving in my mind the changeful state
> Of sublunary grandeur, pomp and shew,
> How time, inexorable, marks the date
> Of all that's gay, or great, or good below;
>
> Chance led me, as I meditating rov'd,
> Where KENILWORTH its gothic glories rear'd,
> Which CLINTON built, which great ELIZA lov'd,
> ELIZA, to th' historic Muse endear'd.
>
> Stupendous walls! to ruin's rage consign'd,
> Mould'ring, submissive to the arm of fate;
> Thro' your lone arches let me entrance find,
> And, silent, ponder on your pristine state.
>
> (2:2)

The poem imagines men summoned to the Elizabethan tournament field hoping to win "The beauteous dame he lov'd with zeal and truth." Of her own time she

remarks, "Love, pleas'd, accepts a milder sacrifice,— / The time-try'd faith, the gently soothing tale." The poem shifts again to Elizabeth's time, when she and "bevies of the courtly fair ones" hunted "in forests green."

> Now the rough plough-share marks its crooked way,
> Or sun-burnt hinds, with ruthless hands, despoil
> The flow'ry meads of all their rich array,
> And rudely glory in their rustic toil.

Just as it appears that she is joining many of her contemporaries in lamenting what modern agriculture is doing to the land, she compares Elizabethan England, when a stream "at due distance kept the hostile throng," with her own, happier time, when "the green slope, with blooming flow'rs array'd, / Invites the rural train to dance and song" (2:5). If this vision of happy laborers frolicking by a stream strikes us as romanticized, it is more because we have forgotten the numerous country festivals and popular entertainments than because Darwall is falsifying experience. Both the grinding labor and the intervals of pleasure in contrasting natural settings were realities, and the plowed field and changed associations of the stream are reinforcing elements in her poetic reflections on change and mortality. Moreover, unlike the distance between poet and country folk in Gray's *Elegy*,[81] Darwall gently underscores the common sensibility between herself and the laborers, who can find pleasure in nature and community.

Above all, Darwall had an unflinching honesty, and her evaluation of each time, her presentation of its negatives as well as its mythologized moments, is characteristic. The poem ends with the story of a "village maid" who wanders near "these lone piles by vesper's silver light" and imagines she sees and hears restless spirits and ghosts. The final shift begins, "But reason's eye in other light surveys / This mould'ring monument of earthly state" (2:7). As predictable as is the movement to faith in "eternal day," the double vision from the tournament and the rural respite by the river, the lower class's superstitions and reason's calm eye, give the poem unusual artfulness. The final achievement is one of balance and the exhibition of the kind of display of the mind's reasoning powers typical of Finch, Carter, Jones, and Chudleigh. Lacking the immediacy of Smith's Penshurst sonnet, it yet captures the way history haunted British people in the last quarter of the century. As Darwall demonstrates here, the elegy form was ideally suited to the tendency to compare the past's greatest moments with the present and to reflect on where the nation was and where it was going.

The elegies in Darwall's first volume are about the search for happiness. *Liberty, an Elegy* was annotated, "Feigned to be written from the happy Valley of

Ambara." Like the characters in Johnson's *Rasselas*, the speaker feels confined and finds no diversion or satisfaction in a beautiful, peaceful setting: "The Velvet Lawns diversify'd with Flow'rs, / In sweet Succession ev'ry Morn the same." Written to her friend Elizabeth Loggin, the poem portrays Loggin as free. Darwall had been reading Johnson's *Rasselas*, and this poem and *Elegy on leaving* —— have been read for insight into Darwall's feelings after she moved to Walsall, leaving Loggin and her family to keep house for her brother, and *Liberty* has been read as resentment of the pastoral mode.[82] Rather than resentment, Darwall may have been trying to illustrate the difference between pastoral and elegy that Shenstone made in his "Essay on Elegy." He found them distinct forms, with elegy superior, "as much as the plain but judicious landlord may be imagined to surpass his tenant both in dignity and understanding. . . . It should also tend to elevate the more tranquil virtues of humility, disinterestedness, simplicity, and innocence: but then there is a degree of elegance and refinement . . . that raises elegy above [pastoral]."[83] He was expressing the requirement of propriety and elegance in language that stretches from antiquity into our own time. The language, sentiments, allusions, and complexity of thought in Darwall's elegies are indeed higher than in her pastorals. *Elegy on the Search of Happiness. Addressed to Miss Loggin* conforms to Shenstone's definition of the elegy, which allowed any subject but required a "tender and querulous idea." He went on to insist that the elegy "illustrates and endears the private [virtue]."[84] *Liberty* has some beautiful, musical nature description, and its descriptions of the freedom of birds are especially good. This poem, written in December 1759 and published in the *Royal Female Magazine* in May 1760 and then in at least four more magazines before the summer of 1762, gives a hint of her later, more profound poetry.

Darwall, the respect awarded women poets, and her poetry had changed by the time her 1794 collection was published. The elegy had become an increasingly mixed form, and in the best elegies by women beauty and emotional force come from the combining of a century of feminized forms. As they drew upon friendship and retirement poetry, privileged some of their traditional characteristics, shaped them to express their experiences and gendered perspectives, women poets continued to draw from the masculine tradition. Darwall's *Elegy, Addressed to Miss Hewan*, like Gray's *Elegy*, treats the catalogue of classical delusionary sources of happiness in elegiac quatrains, slides into the images of women's retirement poetry, and concludes with the classical elegy's emphasis on the song and the relationship rather than on death and the solitary, interiorizing mind, as was becoming increasingly conventional in elegies by men.

Darwall identified Mrs. Hewan as a Scot with whom she had had a "short but agreeable intimacy in the year 1766."[85] Because elegies often play on the separation of public and private spheres, they can highlight the contrasts for the sexes in the meaning and experience of the increasing separation of the spheres. Darwall's elegy is an understated example. It deliberately evokes Gray's *Elegy* with lines such as, "The glare of wealth, the pageantry of pow'r" and "Be mine along the calm sequester'd vale / Of humble life to keep my silent way" (2:65, 67). It contrasts the world of ambition and competition with a woman's retreat and is Darwall's strongest expression of female desire. Written only a few years after her marriage, these poems return with new maturity and awareness to a contemplation of the special pleasure of retreat with a female friend. "When sober ev'ning draws her shadowy vest, / . . . / With thee, sweet ETHELINDA, let me stray." She imagines "sweet converse in some green alcove," and Hewan's presence "blesses" the time together (2:67–68).

Compared with the *Elegy on the Search of Happiness. Addressed to Miss Loggin*, this one is relatively free of trite phrases. The honesty and simplicity of the language contrast to the earlier poem's "Now smiles the Infant *Morn* serenely gay." The pleasure of Mrs. Hewan's company and Darwall's desire for it are clear; the earlier poem ends with a distancing, rather Popeian echo: "Still may the blooming Goddess bless my *Friend*" (80). She was never able to master diction and metrics well enough to eliminate completely awkwardly contracted words, but she was a decidedly better poet by 1794. Although the later elegy is about a relationship, not a death, it intimates the brevity of such times together and such relationships. Rather than a trajectory of realization of loss, this elegy is what George Haggerty has identified as a "trajectory of desire."[86] In contrast to the majority of elegies and retirement and friendship poems, *Mrs. Hewan* concludes, not with a vision of the apotheosis of union in heaven, but with a decidedly this-world "pleasures that can never cloy."

Seward also wrote elegies throughout her life. More than a dozen elegies are contained in Scott's edition of Seward's poetry, and she wrote a set of epitaphs. Some of them show an ease with form similar to that of Darwall, while others seem to have come from radical engagement with the most masculine aspects of the contemplative elegy. Hers include the love elegy *Elegy. Addressed to Cornet V——, in the autumn 1765*, which is obviously juvenilia; a pastoral elegy filled with tritely used conventions, *Elegy on the Death of Mr. Joseph Sykes, of West Ella, at the Age of Nineteen;* the ambitious, historical *Lichfield. An Elegy;* and, of course, her elegies and monodies on public figures such as Captain Cook. The first volume of

Scott's edition of Seward's poems opens with *The Visions. An Elegy*, a poem written about 1764 that exhibits Seward's lifelong use of the sublime and the gothic. In it her dead sister Sarah "rends" the earth and comes out of the grave wearing her funeral shroud and the now-withered flower wreaths buried with her. At one point Seward proposed a test for poetry: "Are lovely, or terrible objects brought to the eye? — are the metaphors, similes and allusions ingenious and happy? does the sentiment speak to the heart, or the understanding? — and is every line in itself harmonious?"[87] She attempted to reach this standard in *The Visions*, and throughout her career she experimented with the elegy, which offered so many opportunities for terrible objects, ingenious allusions, and expressions from the heart.

Seward wrote a cluster of elegies about 1780 in which she developed her most applauded and still-recognized literary contribution. She experimented with the monody, a form of Greek poetry sung to a lyre or flute by a single voice. Sappho, Alcaeus, and Anacreon wrote them, and Milton's epigraph calls *Lycidas* a monody. They were not commonly written in the eighteenth century, but they were not unknown; for example, Mary Masters wrote one on Addison, and Dodsley published Richard West's on Queen Caroline. The Greek monodies were often written in the voice of a specific tragic character, and they were usually directed to a more private audience than was the melic choral poetry. Seward's discovery and development of the monody freed her from whatever discomfort she might have felt with the memorial elegy.

As in retirement poetry, the concept of ownership comes into discussions of poetry, and contrasts between men and women emerge. In Greece the right to mourn was legally connected to the right to inherit, which was sometimes competitive, and this theme survives quite overtly in important English literature, as it does in *Hamlet*. Sacks argues that "since the time of Moschus's lament for Bion, many elegies pivot around the issue of poetic inheritance."[88] Dryden and Gray inherit some of the poetic, and therefore public, obligations that Oldham and West professed, and Reeve tries to cast herself as doing the same with Churchill. Certainly the assertion of the right to mourn and the identification of legacies are central to many elegies by women, and these themes are often actualized through dynamic expressions of the interpenetration of the public and private. Seward's *Elegy on Captain Cook* begins by discussing Cook's death as "a *Nation*'s woe" (emphasis mine) but concludes with his widow standing alone "on Albion's steep," an "ill-fated Matron" and "wretched Mourner," thereby replicating the balance between nation and wife in Jones's *In Memory of . . . Beauclerk*. As is

common in poems depicting widows, this one says that Cook's death means that the wife has "lost each fond delight," but Britannia herself appears to the widow and promises her that Cook awaits her in heaven. The God of Cook's public mission is the God of his marriage, and that is offered as consolation to the widow:

> The ATTENDANT Power, that bade his sails expand,
> And waft her blessings to each barren land,
> Now raptur'd bears him to the immortal plains,
> Where Mercy hails him with congenial strains;
> Where soars, on Joy's white plume, his spirit free,
> And angels choir him, while he waits for THEE.

Many of Cook's virtues are identified with domestic, private ones, such as his benevolence toward the natives and his compassion for his men, while others, such as his courage and seamanship, are described in emphatically masculine terms. He is styled "this dove of human-kind" and steadfast through the many moods of the sea.[89]

In *Monody on Major André* Seward highlights the fact that Major André courted her friend Honora Sneyd and wrote Seward personal letters and by doing so establishes her legitimate right to mourn, to "own" and define André's public, international legacy. Immediately after asserting that the poet who celebrated Cook should not let André's death pass in silence, she claims her special right: "with strong resistless pleas, / Rise the *recorded* days she pass'd with thee" (2:70, emphasis mine). Some reviews recognized this claim, as the *Critical Review* did, when the reviewer noted that "Miss Seward's and Mr. André's families, having been so intimately connected, the author, we may observe, writes immediately from her own feelings. . . , and to this we are, no doubt, to attribute, in a great measure, that strength and pathos which runs through the whole of this most pleasing elegy."[90] Earlier, Seward had done something similar in *Monody on Mrs. Richard Vyse* and *Monody. On the Death of David Garrick*. Garrick was also from Lichfield, the friend of Samuel Johnson, whose stepson had almost married Seward's sister. Moreover, the topic had been assigned at Batheaston; for these reasons, her right to the topic and to mourning had a private dimension. She won a prize for it, and the central verse, which captures Garrick in a series of Shakespearian roles, is well done and quite effective. Written in smooth heroic couplets such as he would have spoken in many plays, some of the images are still famous: "Or, starting from his couch, with wild affright / When the crown'd Murderer

glares upon our sight" recalls William Hogarth's famous painting of Garrick as Richard III.

The *Monody on Major André* has a dramatic beginning: "Loud howls the storm! the vex'd Atlantic roars!" Britain, Winter, Honour, Valour, Mercy, and Vengeance move among the groans, shrieks, "cries of horror," and "deep curses." "And shall the Muse, that marks the solemn scene, / . . . / Refuse to mingle in the awful train. . . ?" the second verse begins. William Hayley, then considered by many "the first poet of England,"[91] had written a poem in which Seward was the recipient of the Muse of Elegy's power, and in the kind of self-referential claim to right and duty that Defoe used in his poetry she writes of herself and André:

> From public fame shall admiration fire
> The boldest numbers of her raptur'd lyre
> To hymn a stranger? — and with ardent lay
> Lead the wild mourner round her COOK's morai,
> While ANDRE fades upon his dreary bier,
> And JULIA's only tribute is her tear?
> Dear, lovely Youth! whose gentle virtues stole
> Through Friendship's soft'ning medium on her soul!
>
> (2:69–70)

Her *Elegy on Captain Cook* had been reviewed favorably and quickly went through three editions (two in 1780 and another in 1781; there were two more in 1784). She invokes it, calls herself the name André used for her in their correspondence, and quickly claims both personal and patriotic mourning.[92]

Seward had considerable narrative skill, and in listing André's social graces and poetic, musical, and artistic abilities she gives the most space to his painting, saying that he could "bid the glowing ivory breathe and speak." These lines introduce the two miniatures André did of Honora Sneyd, one that was always on her arm and one that he carried into battle and hid in his mouth the first time he was captured by the enemy. Seward casts him in the familiar dramatic and fictional role of the lover thwarted because of differences in fortune or background by unsympathetic parents. (Perhaps wisely, since historians have concluded of André that "entirely on his own, he made a blundering failure of his supremely important mission" and was "incredibly inept," Seward, in the same historian's words, tells André's story "in a curiously allusive manner.")[93] This was a popular situation, including the man's joining the army or navy. Hundreds of poems, often ending in the suicide of one or both lovers, were read and wept over in fashionable parlors.

André is portrayed as saying, "HONORA lost! I woo a sterner bride, / The arm'd Bellona calls me to her side: / Harsh is the music of our marriage strain!" (2:75). The poem moves effectively and smoothly between the calm tenor of life during the courtship and the scenes of war. Using Latinate words and feminine rhymes and then Anglo-Saxon and masculine rhymes, she makes war frightening and foreign. The contrast is always there and is re-created in a variety of ways: "Oh! hast thou seen a blooming morn of May," "Oh! hast thou seen the cruel storm arise," she writes, and these lines refer both to peace and war and to André's private moods and hopes (2:82). Reviews, including the influential *Critical Review*, recognized her ability to write and deploy both "strong, nervous, and manly" and "soft, elegant, and harmonious" verse effectively in the poem.[94]

Beside this story of the faithful lover is the story of America's inconstancy and the justice of Vengeance pointing her finger at the colonial army. The turning point is the dramatic line, "Unnatural compact! — shall a race of slaves [France] / Sustain the ponderous standard Freedom [the colonies] wave?" (2:83). Before that, America "blaz'd for its rights infring'd," and the poet "Saw the firm Congress all her [Britain's] might oppose, / And while I mourn'd her fate, rever'd her foes" (2:83–84). The Americans are guilty of sedition (2:75), and Washington becomes a detestable villain, one who does not honor a noble foe and, as such, the epitome of a now-contemptible enemy. Like the *Elegy on Captain Cook*, this poem comes to serve the nation;[95] in energetic lines Seward contrasts the Americans to "the generous Greek" and compares Britain's situation to a biblical one: André's "dust, like Abel's blood, shall rise, / And call for justice from the angry skies!" The final verse imagines a unified army wearing funeral scarves in his honor and pouring forth to revenge his hanging and "shroudless" burial. (Disreputable spies were hanged; military officers were executed by firing squad.)[96] The movement between these stories of private love and national loyalty, of private faithfulness and America's betrayal of liberty and its English principles, reinforces the virtues and loyalties that the Americans have now proven themselves to lack. An act toward an individual, the failure to *see* and comprehend that individual, becomes the test that indicates the Americans' inability to embody the virtues and motives they have claimed. Therefore, the poem must end, not with consolation, but with the demand that the "British legions" fight and light a "hallow'd PYRE."

Both Cook and André had turned their backs on "Voluptuous LONDON" (*André*, 2:74) and been motivated by benevolence and loyalty, essentially private virtues but crucial for the support of national causes. Shenstone had said that elegy and tragedy were about public virtue and that elegy "illustrates and endears" the private.[97] Especially in the lines about André as a friend and practicing

the sister arts, Seward actualizes this conception. She is absolutely clear about the principles worth supporting and the virtues worth praising. Her poem taught reformists lessons. Harriet Guest points out that Helen Maria Williams followed some of Seward's arguments about the reciprocal private and public costs of war in poems such as *Ode on the Peace*, which mentions Seward. Guest writes, "The *Ode* asserts that it is because the British nation is capable of participating in the grief of individuals, and the pleasure of Seward's poetry, that peace finally comes about: 'The private pang shall ALBION trembling share.' "[98] This is exactly what the abolitionist poets, including Williams, counted on and replicated in their many fervid poems, many of which included a sentimental, highly developed narrative that used the private in myriad telling ways. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Monody on the Death of Chatterton* (1797) is at least as emotive as any of their work and replicates Seward's form by sketching the story of Chatterton's life, casting him as a lone minstrel with national value.

The Elegy and Same-Sex Desire

The opportunities inherent in the elegy form for exploring the interpenetration of the public and private and for expressing same-sex desire between men have recently received considerable critical attention. As in almost all criticism of poetry, elegies by men, not by women or by both sexes, have received this kind of analysis, yet many women's elegies, including Seward's, exemplify both. In the first category, her elegies for Cook and André are especially notable because she so successfully mastered acceptable ways of making sharp judgments and writing "unfeminine" commentary. By casting her stance as one of sensibility heightened by grief she became increasingly skilled at pointing out the public and private implications of actions, policies, and customs. Carried—and protected—by emotion, she could make uninhibited statements about, for instance, benevolence versus imperialism and George Washington. In the second, her poetry about Honora Sneyd and then "the ladies of Llangollen" was recognized even during her lifetime as arising from "romantic female friendships," but Seward is not considered in studies such as Andrew Elfenbein's *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role* or even Susan Lanser's fine "Befriending the Body," which discusses the ladies of Llangollen at length.

Llangollen Vale (1796), a poem about the home of the ladies Sarah Ponsonby and Lady Eleanor Butler, went through three editions in the year it was published, and a few reviewers had commented on the remarkable elegiac outburst on Honora Sneyd in *Monody on Major André. Town and Country*, for instance, quoted

eighteen of these lines and the section on George Washington in its review.[99] The Sewards' five children after Anna and her younger sister Sarah had died in infancy or been stillborn, and Honora Sneyd had come to live with the Sewards when Anna was thirteen and Sarah eleven. Honora's mother had died, leaving her father with eight children, and it was not uncommon for couples like the Sewards to take in such children. Anna Laetitia Barbauld and her husband, for instance, took her brother's third son to raise as their own before he was two years old.[100] Anna and Sarah, being near in age, were already extremely close, and they adored Honora. Sarah died in 1764, and Honora in 1780, and even before Honora's death Anna was writing remarkable elegies and elegiac sonnets to and about her. These poems are full of arresting images in specific addresses to Honora.

♦ From *The Visions. An Elegy*, written for Sarah ("Alinda") but about Honora:

O! like their loved ALINDA, soft and warm,
. . . . . .

And dost thou stretch, dear maid, those gentle arms,
Smile through thy tears, in pity's hallow'd guile?
Shield me, my love, from woe's o'erwhelming harms,
Thy tears are balm, and peace is in thy smile.

(1:9)

♦ From the *Epistle to Miss Honora Sneyd:*

Ah! dearest, mark thou, with a playing smile,
The flattering, soothing, self-deceiving guile!
Back on the half-closed door I turn'd mine eye,
And thought my heart to fancy thou wert nigh;
That, as thou'rt wont, at Love's alarm'd request,
Thou hadst return'd to seek a warmer vest,
To shield thee from the dangers evening brings.

(1:76–77)

♦ From *Honora, An Elegy*, written in 1769, when Honora went to Shropshire for a month:

Be then th' embosom'd image only sought [by memory],
Since perfect only can its magic prove!
O! rise with all HONORA's sweetness fraught,
Vivid, and perfect, as her ANNA's love.

(1:66)

♦ From *Lichfield, An Elegy*, written shortly after Sneyd's death:

O! fairest among women!

(1:96)

♦ And from Sonnet X, *To Honora Sneyd, April 1773:*

. . . remembrance of our vanish'd joys;
When for the love-warm looks, in which I live,
But cold respect must greet me . . .
. . . . . .
I could not learn my struggling heart to tear
From thy loved form, that thro' my memory strays.

(3:131)

"Strays" through "thy loved form" gives a physical — a tangible — reality to Honora and to what Seward cannot bear to lose. The sonnet is a single sentence beginning with the stark address, "Honora, should that cruel time arrive," and Seward maintains the intensity of what is really a *cri de coeur*.

Seward left a record of the moment Honora became the object of desire. After Sarah's death Seward had not wanted to return to the suite the sisters had shared, but Honora drew her in. Of this first return Seward writes in a letter dated August 1764, "Honora then led me to the window, and made me observe how beautifully the setting sun had gilded those spires, whose illumination our departed friend used to contemplate with delight." She had said, "We will love them more than ever for her sake." "At that instant," Seward continues, "I felt that in this apartment, of all other places, I should be most contented, most consoled. . . . With what an insight into the human passions is this dear creature [Sneyd] born!" (1:cxliii). Years later the view and other natural settings are identified with Honora. Sonnet VI, for instance, includes the lines "but Love and Memory cling / To their known scene" (3:127). Seward often associated Honora with the most personally meaningful settings in her life. In 1784, for instance, she mingled her with one of her two favorite writing spots, a terrace overlooking the valley of the Stow: "I am writing upon this dear green terrace. . . . The embosomed Vale of Stow . . . glows sunny. . . . How often has our lost Honora hung over the wall of this terrace, enamoured of its scenic graces!"[101] It was Honora, too, who seemed most alive to the view of the cathedral spires that Seward could see from her bedroom suite.

Within a few days of returning to her home Seward wrote *The Visions*.[102] She recognizes the similarity between Sarah and Honora; Sarah would have been her

parents' comfort in their old age, and now Honora will be better at comforting them than she: "Ill can my frailer mind's impetuous fire / Compensate her mild soul's eternal flight!" (1:8). *The Visions* is in three parts, the first about Sarah, the second a vision of Patience offering comfort, and the third the transfer of the role of comforter and sister to Honora. Patience speaks the conventional sentiments of consolation, including the promise of heaven, but it is Honora that matters. The transfer of passionate love promised in the letter is made in the last lines of the poem: "Thy love, my dear HONORA, shall revive / The joys that faded o'er ALINDA's urn" (1:9). The 1769 *Honora, An Elegy* is a near blazon as it catalogues her beauties, concluding with "But fairest when her vermeil lips disclose, / . . . / . . . the mental graces all her own" (1:67). In harmony with its title, *Elegy written at the Sea-side* begins, "I write, HONORA, on the sparkling sand! — / The envious waves forbid the trace to stay." Written in four elegiac quatrains, this economical poem takes the trope of poetry's giving the beloved immortality and makes it an expression of female-female desire: "Love and the Muse can boast superior power, / Indelible the letters they shall frame" (1:82–83).

Same-sex desire has become a commonly recognized theme in literature; even so, only a few critics have taken up the subject of eroticized sisterly relationships. An exception is George Haggerty, who writes perceptively, "The most profoundly emotional and physical relations between women emerge from the family itself. Not only are sisters intimate in ways that Austen's novel dramatizes (and her letters have infamously suggested), other family relations can be read as erotic in any number of contexts."[103] Anne Bannerman, a poet considered as possibly lesbian by Andrew Elfenbein, wrote in *The Nun (1800)*, "O! Sister of my soul! I seek you here; / . . . / Art thou not dearer to this aching breast, / Than joy, and freedom, happiness, and rest?"[104] Yet Peter Fenves's commonsense statement explains one of the reasons that these relationships have been ignored or seen as "meaningless": "Whenever friendship is represented in terms of fraternity and brothers are implicitly or explicitly understood to be prohibited from relating to one another in a sexual manner . . . friendship is effectively removed from the sphere of sexuality."[105]

The lines between various kinds and levels of intimacy are infinitely permeable and confused. In a time when rooms in cold climates were heated with fireplaces and family members routinely slept together — including Anna and Sarah and then Anna and Honora (and Anna, Sarah, and Honora probably slept together at least some of the time) — is "warm and soft" not a completely predictable, even deeply poignant image? Is it erotic? Does it express powerful desire?

Absolutely. Yet no amount of historicizing or applying modern theory can assign it a category. As Haggerty asks, "But who is to set the measure of 'love' in these situations?" And he adds that "it is impossible to distinguish love from *love*."[106] Sisters and women friends held hands, kissed, and caressed each other, and from childhood on these signs were taken to be of feminine gentleness, nurturing, caring, and the soft, affectionate heart that made for good wives and mothers.

Such touching was, of course, an expression of sensuality, varying in degree and kind among people, as Sedgwick's arrestingly obvious list in *Epistemology of the Closet* suggests.[107] "Soft and warm" can mean comforting in a cold night or arousing erotic passion, or it may describe the most obvious characteristic of an object. A beloved baby can be "soft and warm," as can the body of a lover. Any inquiry directed toward distinguishing among kinds of love and discovering and then defining the meaning of erotic or even physical behaviors is hopelessly complicated by individual differences, as well as by sociohistorical biases and individual conceptions. Yet it is clear that Seward's love for Honora is in some ways "transgressive." Terry Castle's words about Jane and Cassandra Austen—"primitive adhesiveness—and underlying eros"—resonate.[108]

The trinity of Honora, André, and Anna is established early in the *Monody on Major André.* Anna wears on her wrist the miniature of Honora that André painted in 1769, and Honora had died five months before him. In her essay on the prominence of the "display" of the "befriended body," among the evidence that Susan Lanser cites is the fact that "women often carried one another's portraits in lockets or bracelets which they publicly gazed upon or pressed to their lips."[109] Apparently Seward even sleeps with hers. The physical weight of the ornament reminds her of them both, and the line "And each lorn thought, each long regret beguiles" can refer to their early deaths, to the times the three shared, but also to her estrangement from Honora, which dated from Honora's marriage to Richard Edgeworth four years after the break with André.[110]

Seward tells his and Honora's story briefly and sentimentally, beginning, "Dear lost Honora!" But even this romantic tale begins a turn against Honora. "Now Prudence, in her cold and thrifty care, / Frown'd on the maid, and bade the youth despair: / . . . / . . . but while the fair-one's sighs / Dispense like April-storms in sunny skies, / The firmer lover . . ." (2:73). The verse concludes with André discovering Honora's marriage and sets up the impassioned central section of the monody in which Seward assumes the role of speaking for André, a role that seems to mimic the actual relationship among them in the summer of 1769. André was then eighteen, Honora by all accounts rather passive, and Seward the

leader. André and Honora's relationship is really the story of Seward's desire for Honora. The first of André's speeches begins, "Honora lost! my happy rival's bride" (2:74). André and Anna, then, remain true to the now dead, faithless Honora.

> Alas! thy ANDRE's life!
> Oh! what a weary pilgrimage 'twill prove
> Strew'd with the thorns of disappointed love!
> Ne'er can he break the charm, where fond controul
> By habit rooted, lords it o'er the soul.
>
> (2:77)

Considering André's brief, youthful acquaintance with Honora and his eventful military career, these lines seem highly fictionalized but possibly revealing of Seward's feelings.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has maintained that sometimes male-male desire "became intelligible primarily by being routed through triangular relations involving women,"[111] and Honora's brief encounter with André becomes the window revealing Seward's passion. Seward's biographer says that Honora had become "sister, husband, and child combined" to Seward by the time Honora was taken back into her father's home in 1771.[112] Seward, who was by then twenty-seven or twenty-eight, had become one of the women Carolyn Heilbrun has identified as adept at avoiding marriage.[113] Seward described the time between 1766 and 1771, when Honora's "advancing youth gave equality to our connection," as "Edenic" (50). Coming from a canon's daughter, this adjective is telling, and Seward's reactions to events in the rest of Honora's life suggest jealousy and thwarted possession. There is no reason to think that Honora did not reciprocate Seward's feelings until the break at the time of her marriage to Richard Edgeworth. Observers recorded Honora's lack of interest in suitor after suitor, a lack of interest so marked as to have misled even close friends. Sometimes they thought Seward the man's object, and other times they merely commented on remarkably "little appearance of romance." The narration of André's conduct when captured by the Americans allows a second opportunity for Seward to speak through him. This time he addresses his miniature of Honora:

> Shade of my love! — though mute and cold thy charms,
> Ne'er hast thou blest my happy rival's arms!
> To my sad heart each dawn has seen thee prest!

> Each night has laid thee pillow'd on my breast!
> Force shall not tear thee from thy faithful shrine;
> Shade of my love! thou shalt be ever mine!
>
> (2:80)

With André abroad, time has stood still for the miniatures and their possessors. Unlike Honora, the miniatures are pure, still their possessions—"Ne'er hast thou blest my happy rival's arms." Many of the images of André seem more appropriate to Honora: "Relentless fate! whose fury scorns to spare / The snowy breast, red lip, and shining hair." Although "snowy breast" is a symbol of purity, innocence, and a warrior's premature death dating back to antiquity, the other images are decidedly feminine, and almost every description of Honora by Anna mentions her red lips.

Most subversive is the fact that Seward cannot imagine a relationship as complete, as multidimensionally intimate, as "heart to heart," as hers and Honora's. The feminized André, who freely admitted her into his relationship with Honora, who drew and played for her and wrote intimate letters to her—and whom Honora probably did not love deeply—was no threat. Rather, he was a vehicle to further the women's intimacy, to enable greater intimacy. Although it was common for women to attend sisters or close friends on the honeymoon, the fact that Anna was to do that with Sarah is another replication of the Honora-André fiction. For the second time Anna had created, or been put in, a role that rivaled that of husband. Because Anna's relationships with Sarah and then Honora were woman-woman and dated from childhood, each could rival the relationship between husband and wife in intimacy and in its multifaceted nature.

Seward's most immediate elegy for Honora is embedded in *Lichfield*, written in the month of Honora's death. Perhaps coincidentally, the first letter from André to Seward printed with the monody begins with his recollections and reflections on "thrice beloved Lichfield": "Never shall I forget the joy that danced in Honora's eyes, when she first showed [the spires] to me from Needwood Forest. . . . I remember she called them the ladies of the valley—Oh! how I loved them from that instant!" (2:89). These letters suggest some reasons why André fit so well by Anna's dressing-room fire and are also evidence of gender bending. He styles himself one of "five virgins" with his three sisters and Mr. Ewer. Calling himself "Cher Jean," the pet name by which his mother and sisters called him, André puts himself in a feminine world, first in his home and then in the next letter, when he imagines himself with them at their fireside in Seward's dressing room (2:96-97).

"Pray imagine me with you; admit me to your conversations," he wrote.[114] The sexual energy in these letters and in Seward's poems is directed toward Honora; both André and Seward love the largely silent Honora, who adds brief postscripts to Seward's long letters to André. There is a nervous sensibility to their letters, often finding a focal point in one of Honora's intense responses to a scene. Again Seward writes of Lichfield, here in Sonnet VI: ". . . but Love and Memory cling / To their known scene, . . . / . . . / Their shadowy languors, form, devoutly dear / As thine to me, HONORA, with more warm / And anxious gaze the eyes of love sincere / Bend on the charms . . ." (3:127). Her recollections and imaginings of Honora consistently have this kind of physicality and sensuousness. Some of her best poetry is of this kind of association between scene and woman, such as in *Honora, An Elegy:*

> Honora fled, I seek her favourite scene
> With hasty step, as I should meet her there;
> . . . . . .
> This bowery terrace, where she frequent stray'd,
> And frequent cull'd for me the floral wreath,
> That tower, that lake, — yon willow's ample shade,
> All, all the vale her spirit seems to breathe.
>
> (1:65)

André writes lyrically, "This morning I returned to town. . . . A solemn mildness was diffused through the blue horizon. . . . Gilded hills, variegated woods. . . . The very brute creation seem sensible of these beauties" (2:97–98). They love each other more because they share these appreciations, but the discourse provides a way to express intense sensuality.[115] Honora is unmistakably the shared object of desire, and Seward had the real woman, as well as the miniature, during most of the courtship and its aftermath. The result is that a narrative of physically charged, if not sexually explicit, intimate love between Seward and Sneyd becomes clearly visible because of the obviously less intimate heterosexual love story.

Even at the cost of some falsification of facts, Seward made this love story utterly formulaic in the monody.[116] The ideal couple is opposed by a parent, whose authority triumphs; the man joins the military; tragedy results; and the narrative is tinted by sentiment from beginning to end. In part, she may have been responding to the demands of her reading public. At least one reviewer took her to task for departing from another master narrative, complaining that she

should have "represented his judges, at the same time that they were compelled by the unrelenting necessity of military justice to condemn the criminal, venerating the man, and sympathizing with the sufferer."[117] The effect of the formulaic tale of the lovers, however, is to bring her own part and her sexually fraught relationship with Honora decidedly out of the shadows (one is tempted to say "out of the closet").

In 1795 Seward met Sarah Ponsonby and Lady Eleanor Butler, the famous "romantic" couple, and their friendship became intimate almost immediately. From then until 1803 Seward visited almost every other year, and they exchanged long letters and gifts, including trees and handmade items. They transcribed poetry and even essays from periodicals for each other, and some of Seward's most revealing statements about her own and others' work and the critical discussions of the day are in these letters. Ponsonby even copied out the entry in Chambers's *Encyclopedia* on "sonnet" for her, and Seward wrote a long, revealing reflection on it, including the blunt, completely unselfconscious comment, "I was astonished at the stupidity of the critic."[118] Ponsonby and Butler lived the kind of retired, intellectual life that Seward admired and that was idealized in fictions such as *Millenium Hall* and Lennox's *Euphemia* (1790). Seward once wrote about their home, "Longollen Vale is my little Elysium. It is nowhere that my understanding, my taste, and my sentiments luxuriate in such vivid and unalloyed gratification" (*Letters*, 5:10). The words "understanding," "taste," and "sentiments" are significant. Their retreat, like Mary Robinson's home, had a particular kind of cultural capital. The women who created such retreats were both curiosities and objects of admiration. For example, both the *European Magazine* (March 1794) and the *Analytical Review* (April 1796) carried descriptions of their home. In such retreats women were free to be as intellectual as they wished, and although Seward knew no foreign languages, the books in French, Italian, and other languages on their shelves were an essential part of the atmosphere. The three shared a love for cultivated gardens and "prospects" and indulged in what many would call extravagant enthusiasms and sentimental outpourings. Their "sisterly" relationship recalled what Seward believed hers and Honora's had grown into, a sharing of cultivated, intelligent taste and fine, unrestrained feeling. In Seward's letters to the "ladies of Llangollen" she refers easily to their "confidential friendship" and calls them "stars" and their home "the shrine of friendship" and "Edenic" (*Letters*, 4:110, 190; 6:50). To her, Ponsonby and Butler had become personifications of Honora's "ladies of the valley." In one letter, she specifically admits an analogy between herself and Honora and the ladies' re-

lationship to each other and writes that now her attachment to them is "fervent, equal and unalterable"; and she began concluding her letters with specific pledges of friendship, such as "with sentiments more affectionate than language knows how to paint, I bid you both adieu."[119]

By December 1795 Seward had sent them her carefully crafted poem *Llangollen Vale, Inscribed to the Right Honourable Lady Eleanor Butler, and Miss Ponsonby.* When published in 1796 as *Llangollen Vale, with Other Poems*, the volume quickly required two more editions and was reviewed widely. Both the poet and the Llangollen ladies were already very famous, "extensively celebrated," in the words of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in its May 1796 review of Seward's poems. As the *New Annual Register* and the *Analytical Review* pointed out, "the sequestered retreat of an accomplished pair of female friends" "rendered" anything about them "interesting." The *New Annual Register* quoted the parts of the poem that describe the ladies' home, including the notes giving details about their library.[120] The *European Magazine* had printed a picture of their home, but Seward's poem took readers inside. The influential *Monthly*'s review began, "The name prefixed to this small assemblage of poems will be a sufficient warrant . . . to expect the gratification resulting from elegant descriptions, refined sentiment, copious imagery, and harmonious versification." It continued to summarize the poem's content as pursuing "the history of that delightful retreat, from the time of Glendour . . . to its present state, dignified and rendered interesting by the residence of an accomplished pair of female friends."[121] The *European Magazine* reminded its readers that it had already given them a "view" of the ladies' retreat in an earlier issue.[122] Some reviewers commented that the poem was "a warm and affectionate tribute" to Ponsonby and Butler.[123]

The poem is divided into three parts, corresponding to those who had given the vale its fame. The first part sketches the story of Owen Glendower (1359?–1416?), the Welsh national hero who took Aberystwyth, set up a representative parliamentary government, and led continued resistance to Henry IV for "the independence and liberties of his country." After a series of defeats, he disappeared into the mountains and refused to accept the general amnesty offered by Henry V.[124] Always ready to write war poetry, Seward concludes this section with an account of the victory: ". . . in that hour, her own LLANGOLLEN claim / Thermopylae's bright wreath, and aye-enduring flame" (3:73). The next and shortest section honors the ancient bard Hoel as a great love poet. Some scholars consider him mythic, but others identify him as the son of Owen Gwynedd and one of his father's generals in battles against the English. Howel ap Owen Gwynedd wrote

war and love poetry and was assassinated by his half-brothers.[125] Other scholars say that he was exiled for unrecoverable reasons.[126] Gray lists Hoel among the bards killed by Edward I when he subjugated Wales in 1283. By either account Hoel was also a rebel. Seward's source is Thomas Pennant's *A Tour in Wales* (1784), which says that "Howel" was rejected by Lady Myfanwy Vechan, who lived in the ancient Welsh Castle Dinas Bran, the retreat of Gryffydd ap Madog, a traitor during the reign of Henry III. The account identifies the lady as descended from the house of Tudor Trevor and notes that the castle, "the seat of Owen Glyndwr," is an easy tourist jaunt from Llangollen.[127] Seward celebrates him as a love poet: "O! Harp of Cambria, never hast thou known / Notes more mellifluent floating o'er the wires, / Than when thy Bard this brighter Laura sang" (3:74).

The final section turns triumphantly to "sacred Friendship, permanent as pure," exemplified by Ponsonby and Butler. War, love, and friendship thus have heroic representatives. Although most of the section on Ponsonby and Butler praises their natural and acquired abilities and their lifestyle, there are hints of their mixed reputation: "In vain the stern authorities assail, / In vain persuasion spreads her silken lure." The poem ends with a comparison of their home to the ruins of Valle Crucia Abbey, where the nuns lived so differently in their retirement:

> Say, lonely, ruin'd pile, when former years
> Saw your pale train at midnight altars bow;
> Saw Superstition frown upon the tears
> That mourn'd the rash irrevocable vow,
> Wore one young lip gay ELEANORA's smile?
> Did ZARA's look serene one tedious hour beguile?
> (3:79)

She contrasts the Llangollen ladies' happiness to the nuns' resigned sorrow and also draws subtle attention to the fact that the nuns are prisoners of "superstition," while Ponsonby and Butler have refused to submit to the prejudices of their time. Nevertheless, both have withdrawn from ordinary society. Seward's final wish for her two friends is that they die together, thereby never suffering grief and loneliness.

Most of the poem vividly describes their surroundings, and some of the best lines are given to their library, its unusual lamps, and the music, books, and talk shared there. Repeatedly Seward praises their friendship as superior to male bonds:

What boasts tradition, what th' historic theme,
  Stands it in all their chronicles confest
Where the soul's glory shines with clearer beam,
  Than in our sea-zon'd bulwark of the west,
When, in this cambrian Valley, Virtue shows
Where, in her own soft sex, the steadiest lustre glows!
(3:78–79)

Seward creates a portrait of the women's lives and devotion to each other and once again participates vicariously in a relationship that reveals her own same-sex desire. Again, the portrait of their lives becomes the story of her desire.

Seward selected the letters to include in the collection published by Constable, and the percentage of letters to the Llangollen ladies declines as the intimacy and revelations increase. Even without these supposed-missing letters, the identification of the ladies with herself and Honora is startlingly apparent. As she had with earlier poems, she slips an elegy for Honora into a text allegedly primarily about something else. She calls Ponsonby and Butler "Rosalind and Celia," and their home "the Abyssinian valley," "Edenic" (her early word for life with Honora), and a "shrine of friendship" (*Letters*, 4:13, 384; 5:11; 6:50; and 4:190, respectively).

"The lively interest which you have each taken in her idea, excites my fervent wish that you should behold her as she was," Seward wrote (*Letters*, 5:16). *Idea* was still the word for the essence and a Platonic symbol of the whole of a person or thing; Cassandra Austen wore a ring with a lock of Jane's hair from the time of Jane's death until her own, dreamed of her, and wrote, "I know the time must come when my mind will be less engrossed by her idea, but I do not like to think of it."[128] These descriptions, coupled with the words *excites* and *fervent*, reveal the thrill and release Seward found in talking to them about Honora. In 1798 it became her and Honora's shrine, too. At considerable effort, Seward obtained an engraving of George Romney's *Serena of the Triumphs of Temper* and sent it to the ladies, who hung it prominently in their library, "the Lyceum." Seward's letters reveal the substance of their talk: "I would cheerfully have given treble the cost of this engraving, for the consciousness that the similitude of the fair idol of my affections is thus enshrined," she wrote in June 1798.[129] "The form and the face of Honora Sneyd rose beneath his pencil," Seward wrote (5:109). Always admitting that it was an accidental likeness, yet Seward clung to it as she did the miniature. It captured Honora's "face and figure," she wrote, and described again

Honora's lips and "countenance." Every description mentions Honora's body, her physical presence. Seward concludes a letter, "Yes, I am ambitious that her form should be enshrined in the receptacle of grace and beauty, and appear *there distinctly as those Lady E. Butler and Miss Ponsonby*, are engraved on the memory and on the heart of their faithful" (5:17, emphasis mine).

Seward moved her own copy from her sitting room "below stairs, of western aspect, to my little embowered book-room" with a northern window, and back each year. "Thus is this beauteous resemblance my constant companion, and contributes to endear, as the bright reality endeared, in times long past, this pleasant mansion to my affections; —and thus, whenever I lift my eyes from my pen, my book, or the faces of my companions, they anchor on that countenance, which was the sun of my youthful horizon" (5:110). Seward admits that she also treasures a paper shade, which "stands opposite my bed, and has stood there from the time she left this house." Soon after Ponsonby and Butler hang the engraving, Seward visits the shrine, and on leaving she writes,

> If I live, and the fiend of the joints remits his persecution [she suffered severely from rheumatoid arthritis], I hope, next year, to see and converse with friends, to whose society my whole mind is wedded; and to see the image of that fair creature, who shed the light of happiness over many of my youthful years, honoured with so enshrined a situation. (5:142)

Her "whole mind . . . wedded" to the ladies and their lifestyle, she considers each visit a pilgrimage. After her 1802 visit she writes of passing Weston lake, "The stars glimmered . . . but their light did not enable me to distinguish the church, beneath the floor of whose porch rests the mouldered form of my heart—dear Honora" (6:51). In her opinion uniquely capable of understanding her feelings for Honora, Seward writes of what might have been. Occasionally she mentions that the ladies "fled together, in early youth, from the otherwise inextricable mazes of connection,"[130] something Honora did not do.

Anna Seward defined herself as a woman of sensibility, and sensibility was about "the receptivity of the senses," the nerves, and the body.[131] *Sensibility* captured the connection and rapid transmission of feelings, such as sympathy or moral outrage, to physical feelings and signs of those feelings, which could be tears or composing poetry. When Seward came to maturity as an artist, the category was complimentary and "widely accepted by its representatives, who felt themselves part of a distinct modern progressive movement."[132] It implied a vision and striving toward better relationships among people, and the expressions

of it remained physical — weeping, clasping hands, embracing, and feelings in the chest and throat of ecstatic "bursting." For her, an appreciation of Honora and the ladies of Llangollen absolutely had to be physical and instinctive, as well as rational. "For the woman of feeling, affections carry with them an unmistakably erotic charge, and different forms of friendship and even familial bonds can become, in various circumstances, the carefully articulated substitute of sexual activity itself," Haggerty maintains.[133]

By the time Seward wrote *Llangollen Vale* sensibility was a movement in trouble, one now radically divided and divisive. Seward had separated herself from the Jacobin and abolition uses of it, but her continued allegiance to its aesthetic and private-sphere values contributed to the mixed reception of the poem and its aims. The *Critical Review* had said that readers, "if they have any taste, or any heart" would greatly enjoy her *Monody on Major André*, and the phrase captures the perception of the inseparability of taste and compassionate feeling in a person of sensibility.[134] In contrast, the reviews of *Llangollen Vale*, published fifteen years later, incline toward the negative. The style is criticized for obscurity, affectation, and tortured word order, and Seward is accused of succumbing to "prettinesses and conceits" even in the most favorable review.[135]

The reviews make clear that the Llangollen ladies are as interesting a subject as new poems by Seward, and they are respectful of all three women. Yet there are hints of disapproval. The *British Critic*, for instance, accuses Seward of "sometimes a want of perspicuity."[136] Phrases, some lifted out of context from the poem, such as "fairy palace," "volcanic and glow-worm lights," and "amiable peculiarities," and suggestive pairings of "the female friends" with "the romantic spot" [implying "fanciful," "impossible"] are found in every review. They recall the headline of a feature on Ponsonby and Butler in the *General Evening Post:* "Extraordinary Female Affection," a title that cut a number of ways.[137] The *English Review* asserts twice that the collection will not enhance Seward's reputation and comments skeptically and perhaps negatively on the ladies, who, it says, "slighting the allurements of what is termed *life*, have retired to this sequestered vale, thinking (we hope with truth) that their own internal resources will furnish sufficient enjoyment through all the length of future years."[138] It was by this time a common assumption that sensibility writers were willing to champion "a love-relationship which transgresses social prohibitions," one "inevitably self-indulgent and anti-social."[139]

Beneath the polished commonplaces about their elegant, cultured life and "the calm delights of strong female friendship," the controversy over what the

opinion of the ladies of Llangollen should be reared its head.[140] They had, after all, defied parents and community mores, fled their country, and established their own society, known for their tyranny over servants and their unapologetically irregular lifestyle as much as for their gardening and their artistic cultivation. They named their dog "Sapho." Celebrated primarily as a poet in most circles, Sappho was increasingly an emblem of transgressive sexuality, as the anonymous *Satan's Harvest Home* insists: "Not content with our Sex, [she] begins *Amours* with her own, and teaches the Female World a new Sort of Sin, call'd the *Flats*."[141] Hester Thrale visited the Llangollen ladies, said complimentary things of them, and yet called them "damned Sapphists" in a homophobic diary entry."[142] Moreover, more people were objecting to women's physical greetings, and it appears that there was a general opinion about when women crossed the line of appropriate physical expressions of friendship. Although not all used the repulsed terms of "Kissing and Slopping each other," of *Satan's Harvest Home*, eighteenth-century people were indisputably aware of their rationalizations, even fictionalizations, of some specific relationships and, more generally, of a continuum of "acceptability."[143] Seward begins several lines in her poem with "Screen'd," and the lines beginning "In vain the stern authorities assail" point to the pleasure of the very private shrine she helped erect in old age.

A number of critics have interpreted the propagation of the "idealized" or "polite" model of female friendship and, by extension, of a particular lifestyle as attempts to "discipline" women and their conduct and also as efforts to conceal or deny anxieties about sex between women.[144] The repressed fears are obvious in the following observation in *General Evening Post* for 24 July 1790: "The two *female Hermits* of the Welsh Vale must have a strong reciprocal inducement to forego the pleasure of friends and relations for such a system of sequestration;—but should two romantic *Edwins* discover those *Angelianas*, and take up their abode in the same spot, the *connection* would be most improved." What this statement and Seward's poems do is release the "volatile, fractured, dangerous relations of visibility and articulation around homosexual possibility"—in other words, the articulation forces the visibility of a relationship many wanted to deny.[145]

The *setting* in which Seward puts Ponsonby and Butler in her publications contributes to the production of the cultured, idealized model of female friendship, but in fact she actually unleashes imagery of the material relationship. In *Llangollen Vale* she brings them into the setting: "High-born, and high-endow'd, the peerless Twain / Pant for coy Nature's charms 'mid silent dale, and plain."

"My soul perceiv'd / Feelings, that more defied expression's power / To speak them truly, than to paint the charms / Of these distinguish'd bowers," she writes in *A Farewell To the Seat of Lady Eleanor Butler, and Miss Ponsonby* (Scott, 3:347). In remarkable lines that appear to be doing the easier thing, that is, describing the setting, she transforms description into a metaphoric rendering of the women's presence and relationship. She appropriates nature so completely that she can use it to express the inexpressible. She concludes:

> Haste to the scene, benignant powers of life,
> Mild Lachesis, and gay Hygeia, haste,
> From day to day propitious! — on that bank,
> Mossy and canopied with gadding boughs,
> Spin firm the vital thread! and brim the cup
> With juice salubrious! breathing soft, the while,
> Dear Eleanora, and her Zara's name.
>
> (Scott 3:350)

Rather than a heterosexual pair, Seward gives us two female couples, on the one hand the ladies and on the other Lachesis, the Fate who determines the length of the thread of human life, and Hygeia, the personification of Health. Rather than in the indoor, "polite" setting, the last image of the women is luxurious and highly sensual. In all of these poems Seward is the desiring voyeur, envying their relationship and partaking of it vicariously. Intentionally or not, she subverts the relationship between what is in the poem, both textually and intertextually, and what is left out.

The elegy form has been powerfully and eloquently identified with male bonding, power production, authorial self-identification, and the establishment of a hegemonic lineage that is male and owned by male poets, who by association become cultural heroes. Reflections on critical work such as Celeste Shenck's raise the suspicion that the number of elegies written by male poets in their youth points to the conclusion that writing them was, indeed, an initiation rite and an announcement to the world of their intent to assume the mantle of the dead and even replace him in the hierarchical procession of poets. It is true that in their elegies women "as characters and authors are systematically written out of the picture."[146] It may even be true, as Bruce Boehrer argues, that heterosexual love is finally disruptive to the traditional, consolatory movement of elegies, and women, if they are admitted, must be symbol.[147]

Seward and other women poets, perhaps more explicitly than male poets,

make clear that elegies are always as much about love as they are about death—poems of memory and empty arms. In a revisionary book on genres Leigh Gilmore argues that "genre is produced by stabilizing and seeming to answer the [question]: What is a 'self' that it can be represented?"[148] Male poets set up a jealously maintained tradition to do just that for themselves as poets and bearers of culture. Seward demonstrates a variant on the form's usefulness as a place to assert a poetic calling and to affirm a relational identity. *Llangollen Vale* is a poem of self-definition, a realization reinforced by her letters and her lifelong independence and eccentricity. Her poems also belong to a number of women writers' sustained projects, such as the determination to maintain access to political and social debate and to be influential participants in the literary public sphere.[149] Her elegies undermine the sex-gender system, and as do many texts in every genre by women in the century, she uses them to contribute to the project of propagating more attractive and more liberating constructions of female consciousness[150] and to justify a single, autonomous life for intelligent women.

Entertainment and Forgetting

At the end of the century many elegies were combined with imaginative metrical tales, and reviews praised and noted the popularity of uniting, in the words of a review of Seward's *Llangollen Vale*, "historical narrative and picturesque description."[151] Seward, of course, had written a number of poems in that style that had been praised for this combination. Among her juvenile poems are *Love Elegies and Epistles*, a "correspondence" between two lovers of unequal rank. Claimed as inspirations were Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* and letters allegedly trusted to Seward. Her *Louisa* (1784) shows her to be a close reader of women's fiction, and she joins novelists of the 1770s and 1780s such as Frances Brooke, who reinforced national values and, in fact, defined Englishness in a time of global expansionism.[152] Seward and Brooke exchanged familiar letters, and Brooke's novels have the characters embracing the cultured, rural landscape, modest ambitions, and a homogeneous society.

Many poems seamlessly integrate a narrative and elegiac sentiments and conventions. These melodramatic texts were recited as evening entertainment in fashionable homes. By the end of the century they sometimes included shockingly topical statements and political opinion. Anna Seward's *Elegy, Written as from a French Lady, whose husband had been three years prisoner of war at Lichfield* was timely. Written in elegiac quatrains and with Seward's sure meter and charac-

teristic sentimentality, the poem portrays the children finding Lichfield, where their father is being held, on a map. Seward had begun writing about age, and one of the best verses in the poem compares the children, growing in beauty and intelligence, with the speaker: "Yet thou wilt love me more, when thou shalt find / Thy absence written on my faded face" (Scott, 3:379). Throughout the century, novelists shifted to *thee* and *thou* when writing about timeless love, and Seward borrows this convention in these simple lines.

Many of these mixed-form poems told sensational, improbable, and horrifying stories. *Elegy*, by Charlotte Smith, is the story of a woman separated from her lover by his tyrannical father because of class differences. He has died at sea, and the woman goes to the cemetery to sit by his father's grave and wait for the storm to kill her. It does. In Helen Maria Williams's *Euphelia, An Elegy* (1786) a pilgrim hears a woman's piercing wail of hopeless sorrow and follows Euphelia, who has obeyed her father and renounced her lover, Alfred. Euphelia leaps off a cliff as the pilgrim, who is Alfred, calls to her. Melodramatic and gothic, the poem contrasts the domestic bower where the lovers courted to the wild, stormy, night scene. Euphelia says, "To me congenial is the gloom of night, / The savage howlings that infest the air."[153] This strictly fashionable poem—which obviously shares the lovers' situation with Seward's *Monody on Major André*—belongs in a category that we do not often allow poetry: it was written and read as entertainment. William Warner's *Licensing Entertainment*, which is about the novel, suggests how difficult is the struggle for texts intended as entertainment to be accepted as a legitimate kind of writing. Poetry, which once was allowed membership in this category, is no longer credible as leisure reading. Few of the elegiac metrical tales of the period would be greeted today with anything beyond contempt, ridicule, or bewilderment. As Joanna Baillie noted in the preface to her *Fugitive Verses* (1790), "Modern Poetry, within these last thirty years, has become so imaginative, impassioned, and sentimental, that more homely subjects, in simple diction, are held in comparatively small estimation. This, however, is a natural progress of art." At one end of a spectrum, however, such metrical tales popularized poetry, which encouraged the writing and reading of it, and at the other, they served as a step toward the great metrical tales of the Romantics.

Unfortunately, the excellent elegies by eighteenth-century women and their contributions to the form's literary history have been forgotten. Poets like Auden and Ashbery are associated with the great elegy, and women with the "easy," "low," private form. Women's elegies are usually represented en masse as sentimental or even maudlin and relegated to an inconsequential category of "female consolatory

tradition."[154] This marginalization and stigmatizing began in the eighteenth century with poems such as Oliver Goldsmith's sardonic *Elegy on that Glory of her Sex, Mrs. Mary Blaize* (1759). Eric Rothstein says rather condescendingly of women and the form: "Ladies in particular met the ideals of propriety in a form so given to elegance, high-mindedness, and decorous sensibility."[155] As unfair as this conception is and as much as it does a disservice to literary history and, indeed, cultural history, it is perhaps more insidious in its power to obscure women's history and agency. Obviously inseparable from women's friendship and retirement poems, their elegies in all the form's permutations become another space in which women learned to speak in and through the great tradition even as they adapted it, thereby making the form true to their experiences, needs, and aspirations.

Scholars and readers of elegies are always drawn back to two central, inescapable truths: (1) that elegy is personal and (2) that elegy is, in Peter Sacks's words, "characterized by an unusually powerful intertwining of emotion and rhetoric, of loss and figuration. . . . This intertwining [is] both an event and a structure."[156] In women's elegies conventional intertwinings "of emotion and rhetoric, of loss and figuration," were radically altered. Very early in the century their elegies drew upon nature, memory, and an individual subjectivity that would not become common until the Romantic period. Because they mourned an obscure person or because what they knew about the person was private (as in the case of Seward's friendship with André), communal loss and consolation cannot be the dominant theme.

One of the most striking differences between male and female elegy is the construction of the importance and benefits of the relationship between the poet and the dead. James Thompson has emphasized that the elegy is "an ordering rhetoric" and raises the question of whether the social relationships depicted in elegies are "conventional or constructed."[157] As he points out, for male poets "the elegy is something of a stock-in-trade," and therefore many critics have concluded that the relationships in these elegies are largely conventional. Or if the relationships are clearly personal, conventional relationships are invoked to heighten the form, the subjects, and the consolation. Acceptable and normative relationships between women, between women and the public sphere (and its figures), and between women and the forms of the elegy were changing throughout the century. Women who wrote elegies thus were participating in these negotiations. Sometimes they invoke an older model of a relationship, such as the Orinda-style friendship, and at other times, as Seward had, they cast a kind of relationship that they wanted to protect in favorable terms.

The benefits of their relationships survive the grave, and that fact allies these poems with the many friendship poems about memory. Although many women poets knew and occasionally invoke the longstanding association between memory and death, they often go beyond the traditional and the emblematic.[158] In poems with *memory* in their titles, such as Mary Jones's *Verses to the Memory of Miss Clayton* and Anna Seward's *To the Memory of Lady Millar*, the elegy thus becomes an affirmation of a relationship and what Zeiger recognized as "a constitutive place of the living person's ongoing affectionate relations with the dead."[159] Seward's public elegies conclude with versions of conventional consolations—religious for Cook and patriotic for André. Her elegies for Honora and the ladies, however, play memory against presence or absence, and in her old age she wishes the ladies the best death she can imagine: a single lightning bolt killing them together, rather ironically the death Lady Mary Wortley Montagu reported for the couple in her mock Baucis-and-Philemon poem.[160] In these poems and many others by women, places they have inhabited and enjoyed are imbued with the loved one's presence and stimulate memory and, therefore, presence. Elegy became a comfortable and comforting form for them. Kate Lilley says that she found only a single poem—and that anonymous—by a woman mourning another woman writer in the seventeenth century;[161] such poems became common in the eighteenth century. The elegy became a way for women to celebrate a relationship, prolong attachment, and deny the possibility of separation and the obliteration of memory. Their relationship, rather than the death, becomes "the event," and they create a "kind of continuous present" that denies that the relationship has been severed or taken on a communal rather than personal meaning. Although the elegies of these eighteenth-century women are in many ways radically different from the ones that Schenck, Ramazani, and other critics of modern poetry study, it is possible, I believe, to see the coming of what they identify as a "coherent," "elegiac mode of their own, an intertextually verifiable tradition."[162]

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Sonnet, Charlotte Smith, and What Women Wrote

> A grandeur, grace and spirit, all their own.
> — ANNA SEWARD

Scorn Not the Sonnet, *London, 1802*, *Nuns Fret Not*—among William Wordsworth's nearly five hundred sonnets are these three incomparable ones on the form itself. The grounds for them were laid in the eighteenth-century sonnet revival, and women were major participants in it. In the last few years women's contributions have received justified attention, but they are still far from being understood in any refined or detailed way. By 1802 the opinion of the *Critical Review* that "the sonnet has been revived by Charlotte Smith" was accepted,[1] yet even Smith's work is incompletely understood. Stuart Curran and others have argued that the revival of the sonnet was as much a "genuine artistic movement" as the experimentation with the sonnet in England in the Renaissance and that the revival was the period in which the sonnet became a great *English* and major poetic form.[2] Women were among the earliest eighteenth-century experimenters and scholars of the form, and by the end of the century the contributions and achievements of women, including Anna Seward, Mary Robinson, and Helen Maria Williams, had set the stage for what Marlon Ross and others have said was a need for men to reclaim the sonnet.[3]

Today, beside the slim output and mediocrity of the other revivalists (Thomas Edwards, Thomas Warton) Charlotte Smith seems a giant. In 1784 she published

Elegiac Sonnets and Other Essays, and that mood and the form seemed especially congenial for her.[4] Smith let sensibility, the picturesque ode, and somber tones flow into her sonnets and impressively compressed them, thereby reinventing the sonnet and extending its purposes. Without question, she was a major contributor to the revival and is the poet associated with the rebirth of the sonnet as a popular form.[5] I begin by placing Smith within an expanded literary history of the sonnet and argue, in the second section, that she published the first of several important sonnet sequences written by women at the end of the century. The third section describes women's active engagement with the sonnet and one another's work. I conclude the chapter with a study of Smith's other major poetry and her importance as a transitional poet.

The sonnet is, of course, one of the four major forms at the end of the century to which women made major contributions, especially as they became distinctively *English*. This chapter on the sonnet therefore continues the plan of this book to look at the major forms in which women wrote and must, with the chapter on the elegy, serve to suggest what I might have done with the ode and the metrical tale. Charlotte Smith, like the poets discussed in earlier chapters, is also an entrée into an understanding of the kinds of poetry women were writing and of their conceptions of poetry's uses within the culture. As in other chapters, the work of other women is painted into a revised, more complex and subtle literary history. Now recognized as the best woman poet of the last part of the century, as Finch is for the first, Smith also provides the means to understanding what the life of a woman poet could now be. A comparison of her with Finch and Egerton give us a sense of the changing status of women and of women poets in society. Above all, perhaps, Smith is eloquent testimony to the problems that arise from identifying a poet by one type of poem.

The Sonnet and the Political

Smith's first book, an elegant edition of nineteen sonnets with a genteel title, *Elegiac Sonnets, and Other Essays by Charlotte Smith of Bignor Park in Sussex*, was published in 1784, while she was living in King's Bench Prison with her debtor husband. There would be nine editions of *Elegiac Sonnets* in her lifetime, several (the third, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth) with additional poems, and each was praised by the literary world and appreciated by the public. In 1797 the eighth edition became two volumes, and twelve more poems were added to the second volume in the 1800 edition.

No one would have predicted such success for *Elegiac Sonnets*. In the seven-

teenth century the sonnet, this difficult form with its depths of personal emotion, intellectual rigor, dignity, and sensuousness, had fallen into disfavor in spite of its rich legacy. From the Italian sonetto, a little poem with instrumental accompaniment, came Petrarch, who imposed a subject (the moods of love) and a form (fourteen lines of iambic pentameter with an octave and a sestet with one of two rhyme schemes and no more than five rhymes). Wyatt and Surrey brought the form to England, and Spenser, Sidney, Daniel, and Shakespeare made it a major English form. In Shakespeare's and Spenser's hands it became more meditative, intellectual, and dynamic, and the form with three quatrains and a couplet gained ascendency. In the seventeenth century John Donne's *Holy Sonnets* transformed the Petrarchan idealized love object into the Christian God while radically retaining much of the erotic language and imagery. Milton brought other sonnet forms and subjects into English literary history and erased the volta with rhetorical devices, syntax, and content to unify his sonnets into powerful, intellectually and emotionally charged statements or meditations. He acknowledged his debt to Giovanni della Casa, who was known for privileging formal beauty and dignity and did not use the metrical and rhetorical divisions of Petrarch. Archbishop of Benevento and papal nuncio to Venice, della Casa wrote religious and political sonnets that are intricate works of art. Filled with inversions, interpolations, and caesuras, his sonnets develop ideas by striking "through the formal limits of quatrains and tercets and [flowing] across the octave-sestet boundary." As Milton would do, he further united the sonnet with duplex structures, especially alliteration and consonance, antithesis and parallelism, and pairs of adjectives, nouns, and verbs.[6] Although Milton's great sonnets and his writing of occasional ones expanded the appeal of the form and suggested further technical experiments, they attracted little notice and no serious imitators for decades. His expansion of the subject matter to the highly personal *(When I consider how my light is spent)*, the occasional *(Lawrence of virtuous Father)*, and the political *(On the late massacre in Piedmont)* was a part of literary history waiting for its greatest moment.

As John Butt says, after Milton the sonnet was not written for sixty years.[7] Thomas Edwards published the first significant group of sonnets (thirteen) since the seventeenth century in Dodsley's 1748 *Miscellany* and fifty more with *Canons of Criticism* (1748), his attack on Warburton's edition of Shakespeare. Each of his sonnets was written *to* someone, and many are literary criticism (on Shakespeare, Pope, Richardson, editorial principles). Although he wrote Italian sonnets, he said that he had been inspired by Spenser's sonnets but had learned to write "addresses" from Milton.[8] A quiet movement was under way, and women were an

important part of it. In 1755 George Colman and Bonnell Thornton included three sonnets by Mary Monck in their *Poems by Eminent Ladies.* She called them sonettos and labeled one from Petrarch, one from della Casa, and one from Marini. Her Petrarchan sonnet rhymes *aabbccddeeefff*, and its subject is love. The other two sonnets are both on sleep and, surprisingly, are unrhymed. Monck made an effort to reproduce the verbal signatures of each poet in poems on the same subject. The one in imitation of Marini begins, "Soft Sleep, thou son of Silence and of Night, / Parent of wild imaginary forms." The imitation of della Casa reads,

> O sleep, thou gentle Off-spring of still Night's
> Soft humid Shades; sick Mortals sweet repose,
> Pleasing Forgetfulness of all the ills
> That human Life imbitter and perplex.
>
> And now my Soul, that languishes, and finds
> No Rest; and ease my weak and weary Limbs:
> Bend hitherwards, O Sleep, thy aery flight,
> And o'er me drop thy dark extended Wing.
>
> Where is that Silence, shy of Day, and Sun,
> And those light Dreams that with uncertain steps
> Wav'ring attend on the nocturnal Walks?
> Alas! in vain I thee invoke, in vain
> Court the cool Sable Shades: O restless Bed
> Fill'd full with Thorns; O racking dreadful Nights.[9]

Especially in the use of enjambment, caesura with alliterative words on either side of the break, and mood, she demonstrates an understanding of della Casa's influential form. In the same year, Dodsley's *Collection* reprinted Edwards's sonnets, printed Thomas Warton's first published sonnets, and included one sonnet by Judith Cowper Madan and one by Richard Savage. These sonnets show increasing research into sonnet writing, as they are modeled on a variety of sonnets, including one of Lope de Vega's by Richard Roderick.

By 1761 Catherine Talbot was using the sonnet to express her grief and conflict over her renunciation of George Berkeley. Her sonnets move from urgent, intense feeling to a tight resolution of that same feeling. *Sonnet: In [the] Manner of Petrarch* — recalls the situation of his sonnets and opens with an evocative metaphor:

The nightingale that sits on Yonder spray,
  Tho' all of night she plains her hapless Fate,
  Yet since she can in liberty relate
Her griefs, that freedom does those griefs allay. —
But I, aye me! must all the livelong day,
Conceal with sembled cheer a cheerless state,
Nor for dark night does that restraint abate.[10]

As in so many sonnets by women, the emotion in Talbot's gives way to a reasoned resignation. In 1775 Thomas Gray's *Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West* was published posthumously, and his "elegiac sonnet," with its affinities to the poetry of sensibility and melancholy, was endlessly reprinted in collections. Thomas Warton published a fine edition of Milton's "minor" poems, including the sonnets, in 1785. Himself a poet and poet laureate from 1785 to 1790, he had published some sonnets in his 1777 *Poems*, which went through two editions in a year.

When Charlotte Smith began writing sonnets the fad was for the picturesque. Warton had written "sentiment of place" sonnets, and others took up this new sonnet subject. Soon to be extremely popular, these sonnets combined brief, picturesque descriptions with evocation of the mood and reflective thoughts aroused by the place. Smith transformed this new sonnet type into a significant cultural form. Her *Written at Penshurst, in autumn 1788* is one of the finest examples of the type and illustrative of her transformative work. Her sonnet does far more than do the sonnets of place that came to be called "descriptive sonnets." For most poets, including Warton and later William Lisle Bowles, who wrote river sonnets,[11] it was enough to paint a scene or prospect and bathe it in a mood. An entirely representative descriptive sonnet is Helen Maria Williams's *Sonnet: To Twilight* (1786):

Meek Twilight! soften the declining day,
  And bring the hour my pensive spirit loves;
When, o'er the mountain slow descends the ray
  That gives to silence the deserted groves.
Ah, let the happy court the morning still,
  When, in her blooming loveliness array'd,
She bids fresh beauty light the vale, or hill,
  And rapture warble in the vocal shade.
Sweet is the odour of the morning's flower,

And rich in melody her accents rise;
Yet dearer to my soul the shadowy hour,
At which her blossoms close, her music dies—
For then, while languid nature droops her head,
She wakes the tear 'tis luxury to shed.[12]

As lovely and musical as this sonnet is, as good as the language and sensory imagery, it never rises beyond a nature and sensibility poem. A Shakespearian sonnet, it uses the couplet to explain why twilight is the favorite time of day.

Smith's *Written at Penshurst* depends upon Spenser's interlocking rhyme schemes and uses the couplet to hammer home the permanence and purpose of poetry. Like so many poets of the century, she combines poetic kinds freely and imaginatively, thereby increasing the seriousness and artistry of her work. Poetry that did these things was already the rage, and dozens of practitioners of this kind of sonnet sprung up. In 1796 Coleridge would write, "Those Sonnets appear to me the most exquisite, in which moral Sentiments, Affections, or Feelings, are deduced from, and associated with, the scenery of Nature."[13] This was clearly not enough for Smith. Although *Written at Penshurst* does not make the move from prospect to vision that Wordsworth would perfect in a few sonnets and that some of her other sonnets, such as *To Melancholy*, do, it moves firmly and bravely from prospect to the kind of apocalyptic vision so typical of Pope's late Augustan satires. As Daniel Robinson says, "The association of landscape and soul is largely an innovation of Smith's."[14] Over and over she sounds this chord. The final tercet of *To Melancholy. Written on the Banks of the Arun* reads, "Oh Melancholy!—such thy magic power, / That to the soul these dreams are often sweet, / And soothe the pensive visionary mind!" (Curran, 35). All of the terms of the Romantics are here, and she asserts the movement from natural scene to the visionary with the mystical middle terms *magic power* and *soul*.

Written at Penshurst evokes the Renaissance country-house poems and is a meditation on the great house's past political and literary significance. Smith gives the poem heightened significance by turning it into a statement asserting that the private *and* the political are the poet's sacred domains:

Ye towers sublime! deserted now and drear!
Ye woods! deep sighing to the hollow blast,
The musing wanderer loves to linger near,
While History points to all your glories past:
And startling from their haunts the timid deer,

To trace the walks obscured by matted fern,
Which Waller's soothing lyre were wont to hear,
But where now clamours the discordant hern!
The spoiling hand of Time may overturn
These lofty battlements, and quite deface
The fading canvas whence we love to learn
Sydney's keen look, and Sacharissa's grace;
But fame and beauty still defy decay,
Saved by the historic page — the poet's tender lay!
(Curran, 43–44)

Taking her place in the line of poets who have taken Penshurst, the ancestral home of the Sidneys, as a subject,[15] she invokes Edmund Waller, by then frequently chosen to represent refinement, melody, and "sweetness," and concludes with an affirmation of the poet's power to preserve the memory of heroes such as Algernon Sidney and poetic lovers such as Waller and Dorothy, Lady Sidney, daughter of Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester. Thus, she rejects the midcentury turning away from history and participates in the deep engagement with political events and thought that would characterize the work of the women poets of the 1790s.

The poem begins with a prospect, and the poet's perspective is significant: the "musing wanderer" seems to look down on the estate, comprehending it all, rather than looking at it from the same level or from within. The movement is backward and forward through history and around the estate and into the portrait gallery. In 1788 the British were reflecting on their history, for it was the anniversary of the Glorious (or Bloodless) Revolution, and in the face of that event, which seemed to be the symbol of British reason and liberty,[16] William Dolben made his report on the conditions on slave ships,[17] George III suffered his first bout of porphyria, and the storming of the Bastille was but a few months in the future. Algernon Sidney, evoked in line twelve, was, of course, a martyr to the political point of view that triumphed in the Glorious Revolution. In a strikingly bold move for a poet, and especially a woman poet, Smith places herself in their tradition, claims it, and emphasizes the power of poetry. Comparing it to "the fading canvas" in the time when the "sister arts" were much celebrated, she asserts that poetry is more permanent and affirms the nation's need for it. Hanging tangibly in the air is the unspoken question, How will England's future compare with its past?

Throughout her career Smith used this perspective, which has long been

recognized as "allied . . . with political and cultural power and dominance" and "with masculinity and breadth of vision."[18] From her earliest sonnets to her final, posthumously published *Beachy Head* (1807), she assumed as a right a position that asserted her self as poetic, cultural, socioeconomic, political, and even scientific authority. Although she was very rarely defensive, she occasionally elaborated on these roles. Jacqueline Labbe has pointed out that Smith's footnotes are one means by which she establishes different kinds of authority and that in her later texts they "begin to colonize the physical space more usually allotted to the poetry."[19] Her notes are remarkable assertions of the grounds for her often biting judgments, arcane historical allusions, and natural descriptions.

Most of Smith's elaborations on her right to her statements and art are more direct. For example, she wrote a spirited defense of women writing about political issues in the preface to *Desmond* (1792):

> But women it is said have no business with politics—Why not?—Have they no interest in the scenes that are acting around them, in which they have fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, or friends engaged!—Even in the commonest course of female education, they are expected to acquire some knowledge of history; and yet, if they are to have no opinion of what *is* passing, it avails little that they should be informed of what *has passed*.[20]

She added *Written September 1791, during a remarkable thunderstorm, in which the moon was perfectly clear, while the tempest gathered in various directions near the earth* to the 1792 edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* (Curran, 52-53). Interpreted within the contexts of contemporary events and poetic conventions, the poem is an exceptional performance.[21] The first quatrain captures the increasingly unpredictable and threatening course of the French Revolution and the political and social unrest in Great Britain. Taking into account the range of allusions to, and dramatizations of, European events in her novels, the words "various directions" in her title take on greater significance. "What awful pageants crowd the evening sky!" she begins. Almost from beginning to end, the French Revolution had been cast as a mesmerizing and increasingly horrifying spectacle and "pageant."[22] The quatrain concludes, "Terrific thunders burst, and lightnings fly." This prophetic line gives way to the second and third quatrains, which are the poetry of transcendence—"While in serenest azure, beaming high, / Night's regent. . . ." The sounds and horrible sights of battle were often represented as sublime in her time, but in a striking reversal war becomes distant and the moon sublime. The poem has something of the same effect as Thomas Hardy's *In Time of "The*

Breaking of Nations," and Kari Lokke believes that Smith "anticipates Schiller's 'On the Sublime,' published a decade later in 1801, which defines sublimity as spiritual victory over 'the treachery of fate' and an assertion of mental freedom in the face of ineluctable destiny and the accidents of history."[23] As such, the sonnet is a transitional moment between the Augustan apocalyptic perspective and the Romantic conception of transcendence.

Smith's multiple sonnets about writing help return the form to its status as a self-reflexive form and the poet's ultimate claim to being a Poet. As an embattled young wife she wrote of her childhood when she "woke [Nature's] echoes with my artless song" (Sonnet V), a line capturing sentiments usually associated with Wordsworth. *Written at Penshurst* asserts the identity of the poet unequivocably and is an important moment in demonstrating that the form could be used to make the kind of aesthetic and political statements more common in other forms. Sonnet XXXVI describes what poetry means to her. In this, one of her few truly Italian sonnets, she uses the octave to compare the poet to "the lone Wanderer" who pauses, finds wild roses, woodbine, and other flowers, and weaves them into a "gay wreath." The image of making the wreath hints at the art, the *work* of writing poetry, and concludes, "So have I sought thy flowers, fair Poesy! / So charm'd my way with Friendship and the Muse" (Curran, 37). Feminist critics have explicated the importance of the symbolism of weaving, and Smith's poem deserves to be part of this history.

Smith always thought of herself as a poet. "In the stillness of the night, verses occur to me," she once wrote to Cadell and Davies, her publishers.[24] She calls herself "an Authoress" in the preface to the sixth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* in 1792 and says she has "derived from thence many of the greatest advantages of my life" (quoted in Curran, 6). Sonnet LXXXIV, *To the Muse*, is a beautiful look back at what the Muse has become to her over a lifetime within a traditional poem about the anxiety of fading poetic powers. It begins, "Wilt thou forsake me . . ." and laments, "From my faint eyes thy graceful form recedes." The sonnet, however, ends with an echo of Gray's *Elegy*, and the Muse is the kindred spirit, the friend, who will understand the poet best: "But, when in quiet earth that heart shall rest, / Haply may'st thou one sorrowing vigil keep, / Where Pity and Remembrance bend and weep" (Curran, 79). Word after word recollects the *Elegy*, and yet the thought is quite different. Pity and remembrance are not for the poet alone, as they are in Gray, but the shared subject of the Muse and the poet. Gray hopes for understanding; Smith knows that she and the Muse have been kindred spirits. Again Smith has written originally about a transcendent moment.

Not only did Smith study other poets carefully but, like most professionals, she attempted some of the great subjects and forms and gave signals that she was self-consciously placing herself within respected traditions. Subtly recalling the subjects and effects of William Collins's odes, in Sonnet XLV she writes about the power of poetry:

> As in the evening wind thy murmurs swell,
> The Enthusiast of the Lyre who wander'd here.
> Seems yet to strike his visionary shell,
> Of power to call forth Pity's tenderest tear,
> Or wake wild Phrenzy — from her hideous cell!
> (Curran, 43)

In this sonnet and others Smith invokes the aesthetic antitheses pity and fear, which are associated both with tragedy and with the beautiful and the sublime. She places her vision and commitment, if not quite herself, with such English writers as Otway, Collins, and Shakespeare. In her last volume of poetry, *Beachy Head* affirms the poet's importance in the world. *To My Lyre*, another original poem in this book, is a tough-minded, major poem on her life as a poet. She describes herself as "of a different species," much as the poetic portraits of poets from Gray forward do, and in a remarkable move for a woman poet she matter-of-factly acknowledges her achievement:

> And as the time ere long must come
> When I lie silent in the tomb,
> Thou wilt preserve these mournful pages;
> For gentle minds will love my verse,
> And Pity shall my strains rehearse,
> And tell my name to distant ages.
> (Curran, 312)

Sonnet Sequences

Much has been written about the lugubrious nature of Smith's sonnets, but these discussions are founded in misunderstandings.[25] Rather than primarily autobiographical poems, Smith was writing a sonnet sequence; in fact, at least in the beginning she was writing the most difficult kind, the chain. Comparison of, for instance, Bowles's *Sonnets written chiefly in Picturesque Spots* (1789) and Smith's

Elegiac Sonnets demonstrates that his are usually more autobiographical (or cast as autobiography) than hers and that hers are art and, as we shall see, often artifice and performance. Her sonnets explore all the moods of melancholy, just as the great sonnet cycles of Spenser, Sidney, and Shakespeare did those of love. It is only fair to acknowledge, as Michael Spiller points out, that the voice of almost all sonnet sequences is the voice of an individual who suffers, usually from one cause, and expresses different states of that same condition of suffering at different times. John Donne, for instance, wrote, "my verse, the strick Map of my misery."[26]

In her first preface to *Elegiac Sonnets* (in the second edition) Smith wrote that the sonnet was "no improper vehicle for a single sentiment." The sonnets of Petrarch, Sidney, Shakespeare, and Donne had captured brilliantly the mood and reflections of a moment, and Smith brought that concentration of *thought*, not just feeling, back to the form. Years later Dante Gabriel Rossetti would write an introduction to his sonnet sequence: "A Sonnet is a moment's monument— / Memorial from the Soul's eternity / To one dead deathless hour. . . ."[27] Just as other authors of sonnet sequences did, Smith continued to add poems throughout her life, thereby expanding the moods of melancholy and the tones of her poetic voice. Whether we speculate that Smith avoided the usual subject of the sonnet because we agree with modern critics who often say that women, especially married women, found erotic love a difficult and even inappropriate subject for them or think she concurred with eighteenth-century reviewers and women writers who said that love was the overdone, "eternal topic" of women's poetry, Smith takes the great mood of the poetry of her century and turns it into a cycle.

The first sonnet reads,

> The partial Muse has from my earliest hours
> Smiled on the rugged path I'm doomed to tread
> And still with sportive hand has snatch'd wild flowers,
> To weave fantastic garlands for my head:
> But far, far happier is the lot of those
> Who never learn'd her dear delusive art;
> Which, while it decks the head with many a rose,
> Reserves the thorn to fester in the heart.
> For still she bids soft Pity's melting eye
> Stream o'er the ills she knows not to remove,
> Points every pang, and deepens every sigh

> Of mourning Friendship, or unhappy Love.
> Ah! then, how dear the Muse's favours cost,
> *If those paint sorrow best — who feel it most!*
>
> (Curran, 13)

Most sonnet sequences begin with a richly emblematic and intertextual poem that establishes such things as the speaker and what might be called the commitments of the sequence. Women poets often echoed Pope's "I lisp'd in Numbers, for the Numbers came" (*Epistle to Arbuthnot*, line 128) as a form of "permission" for writing, and Smith's opening line recalls the assertion of destiny without repeating the by-then hackneyed quotation of his line. This fickle ("partial") Muse, who slights some petitioners and will not leave others, smiles and "with *sportive* hand has snatch'd wild flowers, / To weave *fantastic* garlands for my head" (emphases mine). This mischievous, playful, happy Muse "snatches" wild, not cultivated, flowers, and thus Smith alludes to her gathering of original inspirations from a broad spectrum of themes, subjects, and poetic forms. The next quatrain is a change of mood, a typically Shakespearian examination of the varying moods of an important, unifying subject as in sonnets such as *This time of year thou dost in me behold:* "But far, far happier is the lot of those. . . ." This quatrain sets up but holds back some of the most distinctive elements of her sequence. Over and over the sonnets will allude to those happier than the speakers; as though looking through an impenetrable window at the happy, the voice of the sonnets will compare the "lots" of humankind. Selecting the rose rather than the laurel to deck the head, Smith alludes not to the prize for poets but to the rose, sign of love, symbol of secrets, and one of the emblems of England.

The last line of this quatrain sets up the final quatrain and couplet, thereby establishing technical innovations that bound her sonnets tightly together with run-on sentences and ideas and even enjambed the Shakespearian and Italian sonnet forms together in dozens of ways. The couplet is a masterful "plotting" of the sonnet:

> Ah! then, how dear the Muse's favours cost,
> *If those paint sorrow best — who feel it most!*

The favors granted by the partial Muse are then very mixed blessings, and the final line returns to an echo of Pope, to one of his earliest assertions of the reasons for his poetic greatness. This appellation also echoes Petrarch's address to the reader, "O gracious and loving souls, / if there be such in the world, and you, bare

shadows and dust, / ah! stay to see what my suffering is!"[28] Just as the rose garland and the thorn are inseparable, so are the honor, responsibility, and pain of being a poet. Firmly asserting her ambitions, she names her relationship to the world—"Pity's melting eye," which will increase the humanity and sensibility of those who read her poetry. Rather than for resolution or consolation, she uses the conclusion of sonnets for illumination; we now know what the Muse's partiality in the age of sensibility means. Thus, the movement is toward an assertion of superior understanding, even unitary completeness, a structure identified with Milton and Keats.[29]

As in other deliberately composed sonnet sequences, the next few sonnets illustrate the promises of the first sonnet. The opening line of Sonnet II, "The garlands fade that Spring so lately wove," alludes to the rose garland and illustrates the promised mood as the garland, a synecdoche for spring, "fades." In a surprising turn the final couplet contrasts the seasons to human experience: "Another May new buds and flowers shall bring; / Ah! why has happiness—no second Spring!" Her images in these sonnets and throughout her career have both concreteness and complexity, a characteristic that Keats especially achieves in poems that promise to "tease us out of thought / As doth eternity."[30] The third sonnet, *To a nightingale*, reinforces the mood and for the first time names it: "Poor melancholy bird—that all night long / Tell'st to the Moon thy tale of tender woe." The second quatrain introduces the poet who "would translate / What mean the sounds that swell thy little breast." The fourth sonnet is *To the Moon* and therefore provides a link to the opening of Sonnet III and concludes with the delayed naming of the perspective, "Poor wearied pilgrim." The next sonnet opens with the image of a happy child weaving bluebells into garlands, and the images and mood shifts replicate those of the opening sonnet. Thus, Smith lays claim to writing the most difficult kind of sonnet cycle, the "chain," which is united in myriad ways,[31] both repetitive of words, images, and ideas and substantively varied as it demonstrates how creatively and nonrepetitively the theme and tone can be actualized.

Through the opening sonnet and the first poems in its sequence Smith claims her place as a poet by her birth, therefore destiny, and by her sensibility, her understanding of suffering, her "pity," and her own difficulties. The voice is both hers and not hers, doubly bathed in the great poetic mood and mode of her time, melancholy, and the great literary tradition that she is replicating. She is claiming both hard-won sensibility and artistry, and she works very hard to make it impossible to deny that the sonnets are art and artifice. Melancholy was the fashionable mood in her young womanhood, and these sonnets contributed to making it the

great reflective, intellectual, philosophical mood and the state of mind associated with subjectivity and genius.[32] Thus, in yet another way Smith is claiming for herself the status of Poet. As Mary Moore says, "Smith lays claim to melancholy, a key marker of the cult of sensibility," which unites her with a tradition of melancholy fusing with genius and therefore helps authorize her poetic venture. "Allied with poems about nature, often evoking natural symbols of the singer and craftsman, such as the nightingale and the spider, Smith's self-authorization as a melancholic writer of the cult of sensibility not only expands the sonnet's little room to accommodate the muses of William Wordsworth and John Keats but also admits the little women."[33] Smith's sensibility, and that of the best of the women who followed her, however, is not that of a "little woman."

In working on the sonnets over years (and many editions) she expanded the snapshots of the moods of melancholy but also expanded the uses of the sonnet form. Instead of reading the sonnets as the record of her unstinting depression and complaints about her hard life—and that her life was hard no one will deny—we should read the sonnets on their own terms, as we would those of a man, and a man writing a sonnet sequence. Taking as the perspective the lonely wanderer, the bard who can travel and *see*, Smith derives power from this moral, solitary, traditional figure.[34] She can understand and paint melancholy and the tradition best in her solitary wanderer because she feels it. Just as the earlier writers of sonnet cycles delighted in creating precisely and in a variety of highly creative ways each mood of love, so she does with melancholy. It can be gentle or despairing, familiar or desperate, and its metaphors and voices are strikingly creative. She had grown up on eighteenth-century poetry full of voices and performances of versions of the self, with Pope's much-quoted *Epistle to Arbuthnot* the finest example. Even Gray's *Elegy* concludes with at least three voices.

Sonnet XL is a good example of the misunderstandings to which Smith's sonnets are vulnerable. In this sonnet she evokes, in rapid succession, "the low, retiring tide," "the world of waters," and the "silent wave" far out at sea and asks, "Can the soft lustre of the sleeping main, / Yon radiant heaven, or all creation's charms, / 'Erase the written troubles of the brain.'" It is easy to find the "single mood" that makes her poetry "tiresome," but to do so would be to exemplify the lack of subtlety in readings of her work. Such a reading fails to recognize that Smith, like so many British poets, found in the sea a never-ending reflection of moods and a reinforcement of the sense of the unity of humankind and nature. This unity argues both empathy and universality. Such a reading would also ignore the fact that the line that she takes from *Macbeth* 5.3.42 is intended to prepare the reader for the final torture of the "vain remorse and indistinguish'd

love" of the *play's* characters. The selection of the Shakespearian form, therefore, is a nice touch and one that underscores what she is developing. Applied to Smith's difficult, embittered life, these lines hardly make sense, but as an extrapolation of Macbeth's agonized request to the doctor to minister to his wife's "rooted sorrow" the sonnet offers her readers numerous pleasures, including the dramatic irony that the play itself provided.

Many of Smith's other poems should be read as experimentation with descriptions of subtle differences in melancholy emotions. Developing the nuances and gradients of melancholy, she writes some that are wild and edge upon madness, others that are gentle and meditative; and many explore the sources and resolutions of the mood. For example, a number of her sonnets are clearly in the voices of other literary characters, an innovation in sonnet writing that many women learned from her.[35] Several of Smith's are drawn from the moods she imagines in the characters in *Macbeth*, another group are keyed to passages in *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and yet others, such as the fine *To Night* (Sonnet XXXIX), were written to reveal and deepen the minds of characters in novels. It became common to depict heroines writing poetry as a mark of their intelligence *and* sensibility. Written at the time when Sarah Siddons was drastically reinterpreting Lady MacBeth and giving unprecedented psychological depth to her characters, the sonnets, such as *To Oblivion* (Sonnet XC), take their melodramatic cast from the tragic moods of the play rather than from Smith's autobiography. In addition to Shakespeare's Macduff, Smith quotes Brook Boothby's Sonnet 13 from *Sorrows: Sacred to the Memory of Penelope* and Thomas Warton's *To Sleep*, thereby creating an intertextual elaboration of a state of mind. By doing so, she makes the desire for relief through forgetfulness to the point of oblivion more painful and more common to humanity.

Many poets of the period, including Anna Seward and Anne Bannerman, dramatized passages or moods in *Werter*; and including poetry in prose fiction was common and an unbroken strategy at least as early as the *New Arcadia*.[36] Smith's *To Night*, for example, is "spoken" by Godolphin, the despairing lover in Smith's *Emmeline*, as he crosses the Channel. Again, in a setting bathed in history and contemporary tension the sonnet goes beyond mood poetry.

> I love thee, mournful, sober-suited Night!
> When the faint moon, yet lingering in her wane,
> And veil'd in clouds, with pale uncertain light
> Hangs o'er the water of the restless main.

In deep depression sunk, the enfeebled mind
  Will to the deaf cold elements complain,
  And tell the embosom'd grief, however vain,
To sullen surges and the viewless wind.
Tho's no repose on this dark breast I find,
  I still enjoy thee — cheerless as thou art;
  For in thy quiet gloom the exhausted heart
Is Calm, tho' wretched; hopeless, yet resign'd.
While to the winds and waves its sorrows given,
May reach — tho' lost on earth — the ear of Heaven!

Another variant on the Spenserian sonnet, its central lines prefigure Wordsworth's imagery and spaciousness, and the final quatrain moves to the moods and tones we associate with Keats. Its ending combines a traditional eighteenth-century conclusion, the hope of reaching "the ear of Heaven," with the Romantic conception of the mystical relationship between nature and the soul.

The perspective of the bard that Smith creates is as effective a unifying device as the moods of melancholy. She was writing at the peak not only of melancholy but also of fascination with bards. Poems featured them, were written in their voices, and collections with varying degrees of legitimacy flowed from presses. In the year of the first edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* the Welsh harpist and antiquarian Edward Jones published *Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards, Preserved by Tradition, and Authentic Manuscripts*, and Thomas Pennant published a twenty-page account of "Eisteddford or sessions of the bards" in *A Tour in Wales;* bards were already ubiquitous in literature composed in every corner of Great Britain.[37] Styling the bard variously as "pilgrim," "wanderer," and, increasingly, "exile" in her sonnets, she could count on her contemporaries' identification of the bard with the history and fall of a nation. Discredited, hunted, exiled, these historical and literary figures lamented a lost time and their own personal situations. Their consciousness, like hers, is always of a mythically happy past and a haunted, lonely present, and their art is dedicated to preserving a national culture and the values of an illustrious people. The American Rebellion, the Gordon Riots, and the early embrace of the French Revolution created — as the War of the Spanish Succession had not — nostalgia for a simpler, more comfortable national consciousness.

As is traditional to the sonnet, the voice is an intricate dance between the subject and the object, between "the poet" — and the writer of sonnets is always a

Poet—and what is being dramatized, and Smith successively complicates it. Unlike the poems of the bards of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, however, her sonnets tend to move from the near past and immediate time to unsettling images of a probable future. In fact, the prophetic vision stretches beyond the immediate and the national to a more distant, more global, and threatening future. Katie Trumpener writes that "[English] Bardic nationalism insists on the rich fullness of national knowledge, on the anchoring of discursive traditions in landscape, in a way of life, in custom."[38] Smith measures up to this standard well, although it might be argued that she came to do so in her novels more fully than in her poetry. Moreover, Smith's sex and changing status complicate acceptance of the historical-seer, bardic perspective, especially as successive editions of her *Elegiac Sonnets* and novel prefaces included increasingly specific autobiographical information.[39] These statements overdetermined identifications between the content and moods of the sonnets and her life, but they may also have reinforced an identification of Smith with the isolated and peripatetic figure.

Recent studies have attempted to restore the formal characteristic of the double voice to Smith's sonnets, the voice that is hers and not hers, but they have incompletely historicized her art. The number of critics who have recognized a double voice attests to how important and varied the strategy is to her art. Adela Pinch and Mary Moore, for instance, both see Smith juxtaposing literary tropes and personal experience. Kathryn Pratt demonstrates that the speaker is both spectator and spectacle and uses individual sonnets as examples, as she does *To Melancholy. Written on the Banks of the Arun, October 1785* (Sonnet LXXXV), which "sets up her speaker as a theatrical spectator."[40] Moore explains that Smith's "Petrarchism . . . reflects a complex allusionary strategy; these forms provide the scenery, in a sense, against which she enacts the economic dependency and erotic victimization of a female speaker."[41] Other critics say what has often been said about Lady Mary Wroth's sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (1621), that a tension between "feminine difference" and the desire to emulate the male poetic models results in a double voice. These discussions conclude, perhaps rightly, that in a culture in which sex is the primary marker of identity, an androgynous voice cannot be created in a mode so strongly marked as gender specific.[42] Some critics, such as Deborah Kennedy, assume that the voice of the sonnets is that of a woman, others, such as Rachel Crawford and Daniel Robinson, that it is that of a man.[43]

As Heather Dubrow has pointed out, the destabilization of gender is common in sonnet sequences.[44] If we agree with Julie Ellison that sensibility demands a

victim, we can see not just a poet claiming her place in a sonnet tradition but a poet who defined herself as a person of sensibility claiming that particular identity to authorize being both subject and object. A prime example is *The Emigrants*, in which Smith says the situation "pressed upon my heart" and claims special understanding of the emigrant women because of her own situation.[45] Yet she speaks clearly both as the overarching seer and a person within a specific time and position, and the voices of the poem and her sonnets are male, female, androgynous, and transcending sex. Sonnets traditionally create what Geoffrey Hartman calls "a vision of voice," a "man speaking to men" [*sic*]. This voice replaces, transforms, tints, transcends, overshadows — the possible operations are numerous — the private voice of the lonely wanderer.[46] The overarching speaker is always wiser than what Michael Spiller calls "his own speaking self."[47] Reading Smith's numerous sonnets on the moon and on autumn together suggests how varied and masterful her use of this dialectic is. The pilgrim is always in the unlocated present, although numerous words and phrases suggest the threatening times in which Smith lived. The transcendent voice is always wise, resigned, above the scene surveyed, supremely self-controlled, and timeless. The formal beauty of the early *To the Moon* (Sonnet IV) depends on the composition of the voices:

> Queen of the silver bow! — by thy pale beam,
> Alone and pensive, I delight to stray,
> And watch thy shadow trembling in the stream,
> Or mark the floating clouds that cross thy way.
> And while I gaze, thy mild and placid light
> Sheds a soft calm upon my troubled breast;
> And oft I think — fair planet of the night,
> That in thy orb, the wretched may have rest:
> The sufferers of the earth perhaps may,
> Released by death — to thy benignant sphere;
> And the sad children of Despair and Woe
> Forget in thee, their cup of sorrow here.
> Oh! that I soon may reach thy world serene,
> Poor wearied pilgrim — in this toiling scene!
>
> (Curran, 15)

The opening three lines, with the borrowing from Anne Finch that individualizes the voice, give way to a floating free into the voice of a more powerful consciousness. The pilgrim speaks again to open the couplet, and the final line is a transition

back to the larger perspective. "Poor wearied pilgrim" is both the pilgrim's description of him- or herself and the wiser voice's pitying description that flows into "in this toiling scene," a phrase animated by hundreds of earlier descriptions of the human condition in a fallen world and also in the bustling, chaotic modern world.

Judith Hawley points out that "it is not always clear what or whose loss [Smith] is mourning," "but overall her sonnets are pervaded by a sense of lament, of absence."[48] This is the mood of the national bard, and it is echoed in British literature as early as the Old English *Seafarer* and *Wanderer.* There is always a mythic, idealized past, a close community, and a warm hearth with friends and family. As in Old English poetry, there is no hope that these happier times can be found or re-created. Some of Smith's quotations reveal the degree of her knowledge of poetry, and the intertextuality that packs her poems contributes to the compression and force the sonnet form demands. For example, the transitional lines in the Italian sonnet *To the goddess of botany* (Sonnet LXXIX) are adapted from the section of Milton's *Lycidas* about the Golden Age. She quotes his "Bells and Flowrets of unnumber'd dyes," which are "To strew the Laureate Hearse."[49]

Many of Smith's sonnets in the 1797 volume 2 were originally published in her novels, and they seem to capture the intensity of the British people's sense of personal threat from immediate events. In these sonnets the double perspective allows the expression of deeply painful feelings even as it reassures with a controlling, distanced, resigned moralist. Sonnet LXXXVI was written to be spoken by Delmont in *The Young Philosopher* as he waits for favorable winds to sail:

> Huge vapours brood above the clifted shore,
> Night on the Ocean settles, dark and mute,
> Save where is heard the repercussive roar
> Of drowsy billows, on the rugged foot
> Of rocks remote; . . .

Smith runs her lines from quatrain to quatrain and makes the conclusion more startling:

> All is black shadow, but the lucid line
> Mark'd by the light surf on the level sand,
> Or where afar the ship-lights faintly shine
> Like wandering fairy fires, that oft on land
> Mislead the Pilgrim. — Such the dubious ray
> That wavering Reason lends, in life's long darkling way.
>
> (Curran, 74)

Trained to trust his reason, Delmont has learned through suffering and observation that reason, like the "lucid line" between surf and sand—which is, indeed, an illusion as the line shifts with each wave—does not make things clear. Again the poem echoes earlier poems, including Dryden's many meditations on Reason's wavering light, and the perspective shifts from the individual "pilgrim" watching the sea to the voice of the sage. Delmont's perspective is one of observer and witness to history, and his voice is the same as that of the exiled, wandering bard. Smith's adoption of this historical stance and her richly allusive verse are part of the development of sensibility as a powerful moral stance in matters of public polity, and study of her poetry in the novels expands our understanding of the significance of sensibility in the work of late-century poets and novelists.

Adela Pinch observes perceptively that "the fundamental unit around which Smith's sonnets seem to be built is not so much the image, or even the individual word or line, but rather the artful, pathetic phrase."[50] These phrases, what Seward labeled "hackneyed scraps of dismality" (*Letters*, 2:287), are often quoted from other poets, and they have always been one of the most misunderstood aspects of Smith's art. Accused in her own time of plagiarism, she responded by footnoting even the most familiar quotations and echoes in her verse. Surely the victim of the kind of gender-based suspicions that Laura Rosenthal identified in *Playwrights and Plagiarists in Early Modern England*, she was writing the kind of richly allusive poetry that had made Gray's *Elegy* so successful. As John Guillory argues, "The most striking formal feature of Gray's poem has always been acknowledged as the density of its intertextuality; its phrases sound familiar even in the absence of identified pretexts, as though it were the anonymous distillations of literary sententiae." Guillory includes a telling quotation from Wordsworth, who was much, much closer to the full range of poetry that Gray read than we are; Wordsworth complained, "Gray wrote English verses as his brother Eton schoolboys wrote Latin, filching a phrase now from one author and now from another."[51] Gray's contemporaries assumed that he knew—and expected them to know—the sources he quoted or echoed. Indeed, John Butt argues that the "pleasure which the texture of Gray's poetry offers. . . . is a sophisticated pleasure derived from observing a great master . . . profoundly aware of a treasury of word and phrase that [his predecessors] have bequeathed him."[52]

In contrast, some of those same contemporaries—Smith's—assumed that she was plagiarizing, stealing lines, because she could write nothing as eloquent and good. In the twentieth century, although accusations of plagiarism were seldom articulated, the same assumption about her motives for "borrowing" have been made. Although Judith Hawley finds Smith "assertive as well as retiring," she

writes that when Smith calls attention to her quotations, she "marks off his poetry as something that she wishes to associate herself with, but cannot surpass."[53] Some critics have speculated that she was attempting to force readers to recognize her genteel background and education, that she was retiring modestly behind male poets, or that she was striving to add cultural capital to her poems. Recent work by Susan Wolfson and John Anderson is more sympathetic and sophisticated. Wolfson identifies numerous ways that Smith uses quotations from Shakespeare, Milton, and Collins to comment on her own time, and Anderson points out how important intertextuality is to *Beachy Head* and that "the most frequent and most telling allusions . . . refer to her previous works."[54]

Guillory describes, generalizing from Gray's case, "a compositional process mediated by a text whose dual status as a means of both producing and consuming texts is now all but forgotten."[55] Smith herself gave a low-key explanation late in life in her *Conversations Introducing Poetry*, when Emily observes a similarity between lines in *To a Hedge-hog* and Burns's *On Scaring some water-fowl:* "Nothing is more usual, than for the same train of thought to produce in poetry, lines greatly resembling each other, of which I could give you many instances of more importance than my little unintentional plagiarism" (2:79). Although both descriptions should be attended to carefully, neither is adequate. As Pinch says, a quotation from another poet can be the nerve center of a poem. Two of Smith's sonnets depend upon the recollection of Milton's sonnet *Methought I saw my late espoused saint.* Smith's Sonnet LXXV is a specific reworking of Milton's sonnet. In hers the pilgrim falls asleep, and "his dear loved maid / Seems beckoning him" to join a dance with nymphs and Naiads. The poem ends, "Then, starting from his dream, he feels his woes again!" Smith provides a note to Sonnet LXXXIX, "I woke, she fled, and day brought back my night. Milton (Sonnet 23, line 14)," and rewrites Milton's sonnet again. An Italian sonnet like Milton's, its sestet concludes with images of the sun's helplessness before her night. Perhaps subversively, these sonnets remind readers that the great male poet also wrote autobiographical, "dismal" sonnets.

Smith obviously found kindred sentiments and states of mind that she wanted to dramatize in the work of other poets. Although her readers might connect these sonnets based on Milton's Sonnet 23 to the death of her daughter, the wanderer's feelings here and in other sonnets were interpretable because they were literary. Guillory's description of a mode of composition fits some of her work as accurately as it does Gray's. Professionally engaged with poetry writing,

she enjoyed playing off the lines and rhythms of the great poets of her century, and she is placing herself beside these poets—in their tradition and, after a few editions of *Elegiac Sonnets*, on their level. Her first sonnet ends with an echo of Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard:* "Ah! then, how dear the Muse's favours cost, / *If those paint sorrow best—who feel it most!*" In this early sonnet she chooses his poem of feminine desire, not one of the masculine satires. Neither does she revise it into a political statement, as she had in *The Emigrants* when she asserted that her own situation gave her special insight into the political and social causes of the emigrants' distress and their private feelings.

Smith's Sonnet XXVII is a concise restatement of the major idea of Gray's *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, recast in the darker mood of her time. In one hundred lines Gray describes the turn from happy childhood to adult life wracked by human emotions, such as ambition and envy, and then by the pains and disappointments of old age:

> The thoughtless Day, the easy Night,
> The Spirits pure, the Slumbers light,
> That fly th' Approach of Morn.
> Alas, regardless of their Doom,
> The little Victims play!

Smith's transition is more gradual but builds to a more pessimistic prophecy:

> O Happy age! when Hope's unclouded ray
> Lights their green path, and prompts their simple mirth;
> Ere yet they feel the thorns that lurking lay
> To wound the wretched pilgrims of the earth;
> Making them rue the hour that gave them birth,
> And threw them on a world so full of pain.
>
> (Curran, 30–31)

In their beauty and craftsmanship Smith's lines compare favorably to Gray's. In both poems the conclusion is Gray's, "To each his Suff'rings: all are Men." Smith's conception of the universe is gloomier, however, and although individuals cause their own and others' suffering, her world is by nature one of suffering. Although the perspective in Gray's poem is the poet's, there is a classical distance that leads to the reflective conclusion: ". . . Why should they know their Fate? / Since Sorrow never comes too late, / And Happiness too swiftly flies. / . . . / No more: where ignorance is Bliss, / 'Tis Folly to be wise." Smith's sonnet begins and

ends with a much more intense, almost personal emotional engagement: "Sighing I see yon little troop at play, / By Sorrow yet untouch'd, unhurt by Care" and finally, "Ah! — for their future fate how many fears / Oppress my heart — and fill mine eyes with tears!" This conclusion, which can strike readers as overly sentimental, is the anxious mood of her immediate contemporaries and a strategy that all of the great Romantics tried with varying success. Sometimes it results in powerful, unforgettable emotion, and sometimes it arouses ridicule of poets who "fall on the thorns of life" to bleed and die figuratively.

Women Poets and the Spread of the Sonnet

The year *Elegiac Sonnets* first appeared, the literary arbiter for *The New Annual Register, or General Repository of History, Politics and Literature for the Year 1784* wrote, "In looking back upon the general poetical productions of the year, we are surprized at the number of them that are derived from the ladies. Two of our first female poets, Miss Seward, and Miss Helen Williams, have distinguished themselves. . . . The Poetical Publications of the year by male authors have exceeded rather in number than in excellence. Indeed few of them have been so distinguished by their merit."[56] Among the women poets of Smith's time in addition to Seward and Williams were Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Susanna Blamire, Mary Robinson, Hester Chapone, Ann Yearsley, Susannah Harrison, Elizabeth Hands, Hannah More, Joanna Baillie, Anne Bannerman, Amelia Opie, and the Falconer sisters, Harriet and Maria. Some of them deserve the attention that Smith has received in this chapter, and ideally groups of them would be discussed with important poetic kinds.

Even though they looked to their near, male contemporaries, especially Collins, Cowper, Shenstone, Young, Crabbe, and Hayley, there is no question that these women were intensely aware of one another. Many were friends, and a significant number of them were critics and literary arbiters who engaged one another repeatedly. The most active engagement among these women was over the sonnet, and Smith was, of course, a lightning rod. While the sonnets of Edwards, Warton, and their male contemporaries were occasional, personal, and largely undistinguished, Smith's were works of art, and their remarkable, sustained popularity and the fact that most of them were irregular brought considerable attention to the form and, from the publication of the first edition, set off a debate about it.[57] In 1796 Coleridge wrote that he had learned the rules for his

sonnets from Smith's and William Lisle Bowles's sonnets,[58] but others had attacked her for departing from the Italian, Shakespearian, or Miltonic patterns. In the same ways, women learned from and came to take critical stances different from hers.

It must have been obvious to the women that Smith knew what she was doing and had taken the "legitimate" sonnet into account in a variety of ways. None of them accused her of ignorance, but each would distance herself from Smith. Smith's first volume included Italian translations as well as four sonnets labeled "From Petrarch," which were imitations of specific sonnets. Moreover, her preface to the first and second editions acknowledged her time's rigid definitions of sonnet: "The little Poems which are here called Sonnets, have, I believe, no very just claim to that title. . . . I am told . . . that the legitimate Sonnet is ill calculated for our language" (Curran, 3). Two sonnets added to the third edition, XXXII and XXXIV, are purely Petrarchan in form, and both are imaginative renditions of the Petrarchan subject. In Sonnet XXXII Otway, believed to have been scorned by the actress Elizabeth Barry, is the mournful, eternally desiring lover.[59] Imagery such as "grey mists," "dim waves," "shadowy phantom," and "pensive visionary mind" portray beautifully the liminal state of Otway's brilliant but disturbed mind. The fifth edition adds her truest Spenserian sonnet, XLII, *Composed during a walk on the Downs, in November 1787*. She chose an epigraph from Petrarch for the second volume of *Elegiac Sonnets*, and by giving such explicit signals and by continuing to write sonnets on Petrarchan themes, she served notice that she understood the traditions from which she was departing.

Ten years after the initial publication of *Elegiac Sonnets*, the relationships of the major women poets to Smith's sonnets were complex and multilayered. On a crass level, Smith had demonstrated to them the potential readership for serious poetry and the rewards—both economic and literary. Smith's editions continued to be favorably reviewed, and much of the praise is aesthetic. Typically noted are her "harmony of versification," "poetic fire," "elegance," and "novelty of the descriptive scenery" (the last three also applied to her novels).[60] A long essay in 1792 applied such "masculine" criteria as "nervous" and "sublime" to her sonnets, quoted some of them beside Milton's, declared her the greatest English sonnet writer, and defended the rigor and excellence of her work.[61] Perhaps it is no coincidence that one of Seward's sonnets written at the height of Smith's fame is studiedly "nervous" and sublime and makes use of some of Smith's most characteristic imagery:

On the damp margin of the sea-beat shore
Lonely at eve to wander; — or reclined
Beneath a rock, what time the rising wind
Mourns o'er the waters, and, with solemn roar,
Vast billows into caverns surging pour,
And back recede alternate; while combin'd
Loud shriek the sea-fowls, harbingers assign'd,
Clamorous and fearful, of the stormy hour;
To listen with deep thought those awful sounds;
Gaze on the boiling, the tumultuous waste,
Or promontory rude, or craggy mounds
Staying the furious main, delights has cast
O'er my rapt spirit, and my thrilling heart,
Dear as the softer joys green vales impart.

(Scott, 3:216)

Seward uses the form of the "legitimate" sonnet to excellent effect, especially as the final couplet suddenly invokes both the sublime and the beautiful, yet the sonnet includes the signs of an experienced poet willing to break with the most conservative formula with, for instance, dependence on sight rhymes and unexpected uses of indentation.

Seward and others insisted that the "legitimate" sonnet adhered to the octave-and-sestet form and, somewhat ironically, endorsed Milton's as well as the Italian models. Choosing and repeating the word *legitimate*, which is so often used to discredit literary competitors, Seward invoked the authority of the *Gentleman's Magazine* and piled up discrediting phrases for other kinds of sonnets in the preface to her *Original Sonnets* (1799): "Elegies of twelve alternate rhimes, closing with a couplet, which *assume* the name of Sonnet . . ."[62] She concludes by dismissing the greatest male critic of the century, whose definition of the sonnet had pronounced it "not very suitable to the English language" and "not been used by any man of eminence since Milton": "Johnson disliked Sonnets, and he equally disliked Blank Verse and Odes. It is vain to combat the prejudice of splenetic aversion. The Sonnet is an highly valuable species of Verse; the best vehicle for a single detached thought, an elevated, or a tender sentiment, and for a succinct description" (vi).

Seward was affirming her position as Britannia's Muse, and her waspish remarks were often what Nicola Trott has called them: "simply the sort of tribute

one author pays to the triumph of another."[63] Comparably, to their contemporaries Robinson was the English Sappho.[64] Both assert poetic identity and make "the sonnet claim" and, in varying degrees, denigrate Smith's poetics. Seward contrasted the "legitimate sonnet" with the "facile form of verse which Mrs. Smith has taken, three elegiac stanzas closing with a couplet."[65] In her preface to *Sappho and Phaon* Robinson too comments on the "legitimate" sonnet and seems to feel some anxiety about its cultural capital. She complained that "every schoolboy, every romantic scribbler, thinks a sonnet a task of little difficulty," and too often "the modern sonnet" suffered from "abrupt termination[s]" of "beautiful . . . pictures" or interesting ideas.[66] Although she does not use the word *facile* or attack Smith,[67] she is as engaged with stretching the form and competing in the arena of the more challenging because more restrictive "legitimate" sonnet. As Rosalie Colie notes, "The sonnet, so firmly established in its size and metrical structure, proved extraordinarily open to the topics, styles, and tones of other literary modes and genres, even to literary criticism."[68] By quoting lines 7–8 of Pope's *Sappho to Phaon* as an epigraph, Robinson is positioning herself in the arena with Pope and Smith, whose first sonnet had also invoked Pope and who wrote the supreme "elegies of woe": "Love taught my tears in sadder notes to flow, / And tun'd my heart to *elegies of woe*" (Pascoe, 157, emphasis mine). Robinson's *Sappho and Phaon* is an attempt to see whether sonnets "may be carried on in a series of sketches, composing in parts, one historical or imaginary subject, and forming in the whole a complete and connected story."[69]

In large and small ways, the women's influence on one another is apparent. Mary Robinson ends her preface to *Sappho and Phaon* with this tribute: "I cannot conclude these opinions without paying tribute to the talent of my illustrious country-women, who, unpatronized by courts, and unprotected by the powerful, persevere in the paths of literature, and ennoble themselves by the unperishable lustre of MENTAL PRE-EMINENCE!" (272). These women were, indeed, a remarkable group of individuals, and they flourished with little patronage and protection. They experimented tirelessly, had high aspirations, and did significant work in popular and evolving forms. Even an isolated poet such as Anne Bannerman shows considerable awareness of women's poetry of the time and Smith's direct influence. Bannerman was a Scot left impoverished by her mother's and brother's deaths. She published *Poems by Anne Bannerman* in 1800 and attempted to remain independent with a subscription volume of most of her previously published poems, *Poems by Anne Bannerman: A New Edition* (1807), but she became a governess and apparently never published again.[70] The 1800 volume includes ten

"original" (irregular) sonnets, eight "Sonnets from Petrarch, Ossian, etc.," and ten sonnets from *Werther* keyed to incidents in the novel, the kind of sonnet from a character's point of view that Smith invented and popularized.

Bannerman's work shows both admiration of Smith and independence from her. For instance, she prefers the "legitimate" form even for a sonnet about melancholy, *Sonnet V. To the Owl:*

> I love thee, cheerless, melancholy bird!
> Soothing to me is thy funereal cry;
> Here build thy lonely nest, and ever nigh
> My dwelling, be thy sullen wailings heard.
>
> Amid the howlings of the northern blast,
> Thou lov'st to mingle thy discordant scream,
> Which to the visionary mind may seem
> To call the sufferer to eternal rest.
>
> And sometimes, with the Spirit of the deep,
> Thou swell'st the roarings of the stormy waves;
> While, rising shroudless from their wat'ry graves,
> Aerial forms along the billows sweep.
> Hark! loud, and louder still, the tempest raves;—
> And still I hear thee from the dizzy steep.[71]

Some poems show that Bannerman was arrested by specific poems by Smith and was inspired to rework them in her own voice. For example, *The Soldier* re-creates the imaginative situation of Smith's *Written at the same place, on seeing a seaman return who had been imprisoned at Rochfort.*[72] In both sonnets a military man on board a ship is unsure what he will find at home after a long absence. Ransomed from a French naval prison, Smith's seaman ". . . can discern / His cottage thatch amid surrounding trees; / Yet, trembling, dreads lest sorrow or disease / Await him there." Bannerman's soldier returns "sick, and wounded, and opprest": "Then rush'd thy fancy on the scene of home; / On all its guiltless pleasures;—her, who chas'd / With looks of anxious tenderness, thy woes."

Smith's sonnet is quick to reassure the reader, "But all he loves are safe; with heart elate, / Tho' poor and plunder'd, he absolves his fate!" In Bannerman's, "that home—a dreary waste! / And the cold grave, where thy fond hopes repose, / Were all that met thee on thy native soil, / And all thy country gave, for years of blood and toil." Smith's has the lovely symmetry of so many of her sonnets and begins

with an image that turns out to be prophetic: "Clouds, gold and purple, o'er the westering ray / Threw a bright veil, and catching lights between." Bannerman's begins with the more personal tone of many writings about the war that was proving so costly: "With swelling heart, I hear thy stifled sigh, / Poor time-worn vet'ran! on thy hoary head / Beats the keen fury of the winter's sky." In 1795, when Smith wrote her sonnet, the cost at home had not been so great, and faith in rebuilding a life was marginally greater than by 1800, when Bannerman published.[73]

After Smith, the women write about the "sonnet claim," and they are making an effort to assure that the sonnet, on which they were staking their artistic reputations, and the kinds of sonnets *they* are writing, becomes the supreme test for the Poet. Seward invokes it repeatedly, and she enjoys reminding correspondents that Boileau claimed that Apollo had invented the "legitimate" sonnet "as a test of skill" (*Letters*, 2:162). Therefore, these poets were not only accepting the sonnet's challenge; they were actively complicating the gendering of the form, moving it away from victimization and toward a new construction of the woman Poet. To some extent the honor of their sex was at stake. For Seward this was a self-conscious and competitive project that she carried out in *Original Sonnets* and in her letters and periodical publications. Many of Seward's positions unwittingly reveal her to be one of the last neoclassicists; she was maintaining the English ability to master and then *improve* a respected form. She certainly was part of the movement to deny that "easy" versifying was what England did to poetic forms (like the ode). Milton's use of periodic sentences, enjambment, and caesura provided poets such as Seward with ways to emphasize or elevate the sonnet's central thought.

It is remarkable the number of times Seward invokes the Poet in the first line of her sestets, and in doing so is constructing an identity for the sonnet-writing woman and for the British Poet. In *To Mr. Henry Cary, On Reading a Description of Pope's Garden*, and *Written . . . on the Death of the Poet Laureate* that is the line in which she specifically attests to how each poet embodies and has achieved the heights of Poetry. *To Mr. Henry Cary*, for example, reads:

> Our greater MILTON, hath, by many a lay
> Form'd on that arduous model, fully shows
> That English verse may happily display
> Those Strict energic measures, which alone
> Deserve the name of Sonnet, and convey
> A grandeur, grace and spirit, all their own.
>
> (Scott, 3:185)

Seward wrote frequently about the sonnet in these terms, and her self-assurance seems global. She describes the sonnets by Milton that she likes best as having "plain majestic energy" and "energetic plainness, sublime in the first degree" and pronounces that she "knows the poetic worth" of her own sonnets and dares "trust their fame to posterity" (Seward, *Letters*, 2:163; 4:143–44, 134). Through her mostly occasional sonnets she illustrates her convictions about the form and often states the sonnet claim. Yet Smith's greatest contributions to the sonnet revival may have been returning the form to being "the voice of the poet, a self-reflexive form about the Poet and Poetry,"[74] and reminding poets of the challenge of the sonnet sequence. Bannerman says that she wrote her ten-sonnet sequence *Songs from Werter* to illustrate how "the capital defect of the sonnet"—"the tedium and monotony attending the perusal of a numerous collection of small unconnected pieces of fourteen lines"—might be overcome.[75] She, like most English readers, uses the phonetic spelling of *Werther*. Each sonnet is keyed to a specific quotation from *Werther* and follows his moods, beginning with "To-day I will see her" and ending with "Charlotte! Charlotte! farewell!"

Mary Darby Robinson was even better known than Charlotte Smith, and as with Smith, her personal life contributed to the popularity of her work. Like Smith, she married at fifteen and unfortunately. She published her first book, *Poems*, in 1775 in an attempt to pay some of her husband's debts, but they were soon in debtors' prison with their baby daughter. She began writing *Captivity: A Poem* there and secured the Duchess of Devonshire's patronage. Encouraged by Garrick, Sheridan, and the actor William Brereton, Robinson began acting at Drury Lane in 1776; her first part was Juliet. She quickly became a star and played parts such as Ophelia, Lady Macbeth, and Rosalind. She changed her life forever by becoming the teenaged Prince of Wales's "Perdita" for a year. His pursuit of her after seeing her performance in *The Winter's Tale* on 3 December 1779, their affair, and her tireless efforts to collect the twenty thousand pounds he had promised to give her when he came of age made her notorious.[76] When Lord Malden negotiated for her with the prince, he was represented as being her lover, and until she began a fifteen-year liaison with Banastre "Bloody" Tarleton, a hero in the American Revolution, she was accused of having one affair after another. Crippled and often in pain after 1783, Robinson, like Smith, turned to writing. James Boaden calls her "a perfect martyr to rheumatism" and describes her forehead as sometimes showing "the cold dew from pain." With "the use of the lower limbs quite gone; carried from room to room, or from her house to her

carriage like an infant; she had the nerve to control her bodily sufferings, so as to indulge the constant use of the pen."[77]

Smith can be accused of commodifying her hard life, and Robinson's achievement has been obscured by her life. That she succeeded Robert Southey as poetry editor of the *Morning Post* and died arranging a three-volume collection of her poetry is seldom mentioned, but the "autobiographical" aspects of *Sappho and Phaon* (1796), with its "jilted" woman's voice, nearly always attracts comment. From at least 1790 Robinson was a professional author, and by the time she published her first novel, *Vancenza*, in 1792, she was so famous that the book sold out on the day it was issued. Her output is astonishing.[78] She lists seventy-four poems written in the last year of her life, and *Lyrical Tales* and her translation of Joseph Hager's *Picture of Palermo* were published that year (1800). At the time of her death she was rearranging her poetry by type, and she did not even try to include many of her poems written for periodicals on highly topical subjects and in fashionable forms.[79]

Reading Robinson's poetry is often like experiencing the obverse of Smith's. Something within Robinson seems to be always on the verge of breaking out in joy, while Smith seems always on the edge of slipping into sadness. Robinson's *Ode to Eloquence* is an example:

> Hail! Goddess of persuasive art!
> The magic of whose tuneful tongue
> Lulls to soft harmony the wand'ring heart
> With fascinating song;
> O, let me hear thy heav'n-taught strain,
> As thro' my quiv'ring pulses steal
> The mingling throbs of joy and pain,
> Which only sensate minds can feel;
> Ah! let me taste the bliss supreme,
> Which thy warm touch unerring flings
> O'er the rapt sense's finest strings,
> When GENIUS, darting from the sky,
> Glances across my wond'ring eye,
> Her animating beam.[80]

In almost everything she wrote her musicality is strikingly apparent, and she wrote in all of the forms her contemporaries enjoyed and respected. *Letter to a*

Friend on Leaving Town is on a trite subject, and almost every observation and example in it is already hackneyed, yet in versification and insight she rises above the pack:

> View the gay courtly dame, and mark her face,
> Where art supply's fair nature's nobler place,
> Luxurious pleasures, all her days divide,
> And fashion taints, bright beauty's greatest pride.
> Each action has its fixt and settled rule,
> Eyes, limbs, and features, are all put to school.
>
> (Pascoe, 73)

Suddenly out of the graceful verse comes "Luxurious pleasures," a weighted phrase in a time when the British could afford luxuries as never before and when these pastimes were causing them much anxiety and self-examination. The lavish expenditure of syllables slows the line and binds meaning to tempo. "Fashion *taints*," she continues, and then notes the "fixt and settled rule," the "put to school" aspect of London society life — beneath luxury and enjoyment she reveals the rigid, Foucauldian discipline. Again the unusual moralist appears: "Thus giddy pleasures they alone pursue, / Merely because, they've nothing else to do" (73). Perhaps a highly successful apprentice piece, with its Horatian-Popeian form and echoes, the poem shocks with the stark insight of women's boredom and prescribed uselessness: "they've nothing else to do." Her conclusion resonates with words such as "taint" from earlier in the poem and unpredictably praises "experience," a daring move for a young woman poet.

Robinson took an entirely independent route by setting out to write a sonnet sequence in legitimate sonnets; moreover, she claimed both the control of reason, the sonnet, and the voice of the supreme poet of passion, Sappho.[81] She joins a number of her contemporaries, primarily novelists, in giving us a portrait of a brilliant woman "enlightened by the most exquisite talents, yet yielding to the destructive controul of ungovernable passions."[82] She tells us that she has done extensive research on Sappho and, in the prefatory "Account of Sappho," reminds the reader that her nation honored her with a coin and a statue. The research elevates Robinson's authority and trans-gender claim. She uses the Abbé Barthélemy's *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Gréce* (1788) to legitimate her assertion that Sappho was a poet of passion ("She loved them to excess, because it was impossible for her to love otherwise") and of sensibility, the now-essential characteristic of a great poet, and to add that "Sappho undertook to inspire the

Lesbian women with a taste for literature." This feminist project also allies Sappho and Robinson with the work of contemporary women, including Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More.

Robinson takes full advantage of the sonnet's double voice by creating an intelligence that writes what Sappho, the supreme poet, would have produced had she had the detachment to describe her own experience. The result is the kind of writing of the body that Claudine Herrmann, Hélène Cixous, and others called for in the twentieth century. Jerome McGann argues that "Sappho becomes a Promethean figure who will inaugurate a new age of enlightenment and higher 'Reason.' " He goes on to say that the sonnet sequence was a "manifesto" and should be appreciated for engaging current poetic theory and as a sophisticated example of the poetry of sensibility.[83] He believes that critics who ignore the art of a literary piece, as he says feminists and cultural critics have done, may lose the ability to appreciate its aesthetics, as he says we have for the poetry of sensibility. He makes a persuasive argument that Robinson's *Sappho and Phaon* is an ambitious theory and practice of this kind of poetry. It would be possible to make the same argument about Seward's sonnets. Robinson is dramatizing and at some points disputing the project of Mary Wollstonecraft and other women of the time. She is portraying the condition of women who, for lack of education, or even early adversity, will give in to feeling and passion. She is also demonstrating both in her art and in her life the position that a woman such as Sappho or herself can attain. She can create the overarching descriptive powers of the woman and the poet who understands the descent into passion and the ideal, balanced mind of the experienced seer. Wollstonecraft—and Robinson—made such a perspective the moral duty, not only of the individual woman but of the society, to teach and nurture.

Daniel Robinson observes shrewdly that both Robinson and Seward "felt they had to claim legitimacy by overwriting the powerful influence of Smith's new form."[84] Bannerman seems to have felt no such need, and some of Helen Maria Williams's most beautiful sonnets, such as *Sonnet: To the Strawberry*, seem deliberate imitations of Smith. The beautiful, nationalistic salute to the strawberry, the global stretch to limes, cocoa, and guava, followed by the comparison of childhood to the sorrowful present, compresses compositional strategies and content from some of Smith's best sonnets and even includes a final line with exclamation and strong alliteration similar to that in sonnets such as Smith's *To the insect of the gossamer*, which ends, "Ah! soon at Sorrow's touch the radiant dreams dissolve!" (Curran, 66–67):

> The Strawberry blooms upon its lowly bed,
> Plant of my native soil! — the lime may fling
> More potent fragrance on the zephyr's wing,
> The milky cocoa richer juices shed,
> The white Guava lovelier blossoms spread —
> But not like thee to fond remembrance bring
> The vanished hours of life's enchanting spring.
> Short calendar of joys for ever fled! —
> Thou bidst the scenes of childhood rise to view,
> The wild-wood path which fancy loves to trace;
> Where veiled in leaves, thy fruit of rosy hue
> Lurked on its pliant stem with modest grace —
> But ah! when thought would later years renew,
> Alas, successive sorrows crowd the space![85]

Robinson was the daughter of an American who was more absent than present in her life, and Helen Maria Williams's father was a Welsh army officer who died when she was a child. In 1784, the year that the *Elegiac Sonnets* appeared, Williams was "a literary star of the first magnitude,"[86] called by the *New Annual Register* essayist a "a truly poetic genius."[87] That year she published her second popular work, *Peru*, a poem about the conquest of the Indians. In July 1790 she accompanied friends to France, and for the rest of her life she lived primarily in that country, where she kept a salon and wrote chronicles, eight volumes of *Letters Written in France* (1790–96), which mingle accounts of events with subjective, anecdotal, and often emotional responses. She was imprisoned briefly in the Luxembourg prison in 1793. Today we know Williams as the most committed political personality of the group. She took unequivocal stands on European imperialism, slavery, the French Revolution, and other causes. Even her paraphrases of the scriptures are partly animated by topical issues, and the theme of poetry writing as ethical *and* aesthetic commitment so common in women's poetry is expressed in her work as a duty to make political statements.

Like most of the other poet-novelists of the period, including Ann Radcliffe and Jane West,[88] Williams included important poetry in her fiction, and her use of it is perhaps more skillful than Smith's. Williams's notable poems *The Bastille* and *An Address to Poetry* are in her novel *Julia* (1790), and there are eight sonnets in her translation of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*.[89] Like Smith, Williams infuses political commentary and social satire into a solidly plotted

novel, and both women look back in English history, as well as to current economic and world events, for explanations of social conditions. In addition to artful uses of poetry, *Julia* provides contemporary opinions about it. Julia is introduced through poetry, and Seymour, the Wertherian hero, writes sonnets.[90] Julia "discovered at a very early age a particular sensibility to poetry," and Williams gives us a gently mocking portrait of the epitome of an aspiring poet, for Julia's first poem, composed at age eight, "displayed, with great diligence, her whole stock of classical knowledge; and obliged all the heathern gods and goddesses, whose names she had been taught, to pass in succession, like the shades of Banquo's line."[91] In contrast, her *Address to Poetry* displays discriminating taste in melodic, dignified octava rima. Williams prefaces the poem with a paragraph that skillfully defends poetry writing, which Julia's exemplary father had encouraged because "a propensity for any elegant art was a source of happiness" (1:13). The text also illustrates the social pleasures of poetry. Seymour writes sonnets and is selected to read two poems from Scotland for the entertainment of the group. The *Song*, by a man, and the *Ballad*, by a woman, conform to gendered notions of poetic forms and parallel the separation of Seymour and Julia.

As in Smith's novels, the poetry deepens and reveals the moods of characters and the darkening of the plot. Two sonnets by Julia, an early one on hope and the despairing one to peace, parallel the movement from optimism to pessimism in the plot and in the poems *The Linnet*, in which the bird is rescued from a cat and flies joyously away, and *Elegy. On finding a young Thrush in the street*, which begins, "Mistaken Bird" and concludes with the bird's falling into "That gloomy area lurking cats infest" (2:27). The elegy can be read to have allegorical applications within the novel, both for the characters and for the political conduct of nations.[92] Other poems are worked into the plot, as is a song played at a private concert.

Although Robinson, Seward, and Williams were known as well as or even more widely than Smith, none except Smith was consistently known for the excellence of her poetry. All, however, defined themselves as serious, even professional literary poets.[93] Smith was, therefore, both an enabling writer and a competitive presence with which to reckon. She had demonstrated that women could write sonnets well and acceptably, had expanded its subjects, and had made the single-mood sonnet one of the most popular and respected poetic forms of her time. The sonnet had to be an important part of serious poets' work. In freeing the sonnet from the reputation of being about thwarted, erotic, heterosexual love, Smith opened it to a multitude of poets, especially women. She also re-

minded her countrymen and women of its political potential, and Robinson's *Sappho and Phaon* is a republican work.[94]

Above all, Smith made the sonnet about the state of mind of subjectivity and genius. Both *Sappho and Phaon* and Seward's sonnets are about these things. In her preface, Seward accentuates subjectivity by regarding the sonnet as "the best vehicle for a single detached thought, an elevated, or a tender sentiment," and genius by the demand for "succinct description" of these things and of the natural world.[95] Robinson emphasizes that she is portraying "the human mind [subjectivity], enlightened by the most exquisite talents [genius]." For both women, the publications of books of sonnets after their poetic reputations were well established were aggressive acts of self-canonization. In her preface, Robinson mentions Milton, Waller, Pope, Spencer, and Collins as "national ornaments," as she argues Sappho had been for the Mytilenians of her birthplace, and she concludes this list with her "illustrious countrywomen." By implication and association, she is among these national treasures. Seward was clearly aware of this ambitious, shared women's endeavor. Although she had written her sonnets over a number of years and most are clearly occasional, she strives in various ways to give them the cultural capital of every kind of sonnet, including the sequence. She describes her sonnets as "a sort of compendium of my sentiments, opinions, and impressions, during the course of more than twenty years" (*Letters*, 4:134).

By reading together the discussions by Bannerman, Seward, Williams, and Robinson, we can see shared gender and genre concerns and varying levels of assurance. As we have seen, before Smith the sonnet as a form was pre-eminently male in every way: in its cultural capital, its meaning for poets, and its subjects and perspectives. All four intended to move beyond the redundant, popular sonnets that had come to dominate poetic periodical publication and to compete before Apollo's gender-blind bench. In a telling sign, they show increasing comfort writing sonnets from the point of view of the male, as especially Bannerman did in her *Werter* sonnets. The most important thing to emphasize, however, is that a number of them took up the sonnet's highest challenge and followed Smith in doing what no male poets were doing: attempting a sonnet sequence. Robinson includes the phrase "in a Series of Legitimate Sonnets," in her title to *Sappho and Phaon*, and Anna Seward published exactly one hundred sonnets in her 1799 collection. These cycles highlight two of the women's greatest contributions to the sonnet revival: experimentation with form, imagery, and rhyme and plentiful illustrations of the possibility of melodic sonnets. Sonnet sequences require both great concentration and, if they are not to be monotonous, great poetic innova-

tion within strict formal limits, and these women felt additional incentive because they were so aware of writing in a time awash with imitative sonnets.

The freedom with which poets of both sexes experimented surely owes a great deal to Smith. Amelia Opie, for example, writes a number of sonnets that experiment with overlapping and interlocking rhyme schemes. *Sonnet to Winter* in her 1802 *Poems* rhymes *ababcbcdedefdf*, thereby moving more by conjoined tercets than by quatrains. Better is Williams's *Sonnet to the Moon* in her novel *Julia*. A Shakespearian sonnet found by the characters near the sad ending to the novel, its smooth and lovely opening compares well with other sonnets on the moon and achieves a statement on the sonnet form and its highest purposes:

> The glitt'ring colours of the day are fled—
> Come, melancholy orb! that dwell'st with night,
> Come! and o'er earth thy wand'ring lustre shed,
> Thy deepest shadow and thy softest light.
> To me congenial is the gloomy grove,
> When with faint rays the sloping uplands shine;
> That gloom, those pensive rays, alike I love,
> Whose sadness seems in sympathy with mine!
> But most for this, pale orb! thy light is dear,
> For this, benignant orb! I hail thee most,
> That while I pour the unavailing tear,
> And mourn that hope to me, in youth is lost!
> Thy light can visionary thoughts impart,
> And lead the Muse to sooth a suff'ring heart.[96]

As she moves from a specific scene to the congenial feeling to the possibility of the leap to some visionary comfort or understanding, Williams is replicating the movement of many of Smith's sonnets but without the kind of revelatory moment common to the sonnets of Wordsworth and Keats.

The Emigrants, *Conversations*, and *Beachy Head*

In many ways, Smith's poetic career is of a piece, and the concentration on her sonnets—mine and most other critics'—offers a sobering lesson. The sense of her *oeuvre* and the extent of her experimentation and engagement with poetry, its history, the popular forms of her time, and the uses of poetry in society are obscured, if not lost, by confining her to a single genre. Smith was an astonish-

ingly accomplished poet who wrote in a very wide variety of forms, leaving her distinctive mark on all she tried. Her first book shows the same attention to structure and commitments to both participation in and revision of tradition that her sonnets do. She created and combined forms, experimented and polished, until her death. To read her poetry chronologically and repeatedly is to be struck by how much control and mastery she exhibits in every form. Technically sophisticated and complexly structured, her poems reward close study even as they consistently stretch the uses of poetry in the culture and require multiple contextualizations. Two very different texts, *The Emigrants* (1793) and *Conversations Introducing Poetry* (1804), give some indications of what poetry became in her hands and how misleading it is to identify her with her sonnets alone.

The Emigrants, in Stuart Curran's opinion, is "in terms of its sheer craft" the "finest piece of extended blank verse in English between Cowper's *The Task* (1785) and Wordsworth's unpublished initial version of *The Prelude* (1799)."[97] A major statement permeated with the feelings, issues, and tensions of the 1790s, *The Emigrants* is carefully structured and multilayered. Each of its two parts has a scene and a time that is integral to the content. The first is on the cliffs above Brighton beach in November 1792, therefore just after the September Massacres in Paris and a year after the French Assembly decreed that all citizens who did not return to France within a month would be subject to death. The nonreturnees' property was forfeited. The poem opens with a lovely description of the season that is symbolic of the emigrants who have landed and settled there. Book 2 is set in April 1793 on an elevation of the Downs from which the sea can be seen. In the months between November and April King Louis XVI had been guillotined and France had declared war on Great Britain. The November scene is set in the morning, when the emigrants have a new life, albeit one dark and forbidding, before them; and the April scene is set in the afternoon, when all of Europe shared pessimism and anxiety. Thus, time and season contradict each other, capturing the uncertainties about the future that the British and the refugees felt.

In Book 1 Smith describes specific examples of the most unsympathetic of the emigrants, members of the Catholic clergy[98] and a wealthy, aristocratic man and woman. In a surprising and risky turn for the time period, the poem is animated more by her reflections on her own country than by those on France. She describes the misery and injustice in her own country, the discrepancies in wealth, and the class abuses, and condemns, among others, "worthless hirelings of a Court!" and "pamper'd Parasites!" She demands that her countrymen, "Study a lesson that concerns ye much; / And trembling, learn, that if oppress'd too long, /

The raging multitude, to madness stung, / Will turn on their oppressors; . . . / . . . / . . . will redress themselves!" (Curran, 147). As Susan Wolfson has recognized, tropes are "energized . . . by English republican tradition."[99] This Lockean conclusion was what English people feared, and it was becoming treason to voice it. She writes in the dedication that events in France have made it unpopular and even dangerous to praise liberty, "which it was once the glory of Englishmen to avow and defend" (Curran, 134). In the first few pages she praises Cowper, Charles James Fox, and James Thomson, all known for their great defenses of liberty in earlier decades. Thus, she aligns herself not only with poets but also with political activists. It is clear that she knew the risks of entering the public arena: "Lo! the suffering world, / Torn by the fearful conflict, shrinks, amaz'd, / From Freedom's name, usurp'd and misapplied," she writes in Book 2.

Book 2 is unified by repeated answers to the question, "What is the promise of the infant year / To those. . . ." Rather than spring's bringing hope and a new beginning to the November of Book 1, her second book multiplies the use of such words as *savage*, *ruffian*, *fiend*, *monster*, and *carnage* and ends with a fervent appeal for a reign of Reason, Liberty, and Peace. The characters of the second book are sympathetic. A mother manages to save one child and escape to the mountains, but both die; a father goes mad after returning home in disguise "From distant lands" only to find his entire family slaughtered; the seven-year-old Louis, then imprisoned, is the "innocent" sacrifice to "all the crimes and follies of thy race." This section establishes authority from personal experience: "Oft have I heard the melancholy tale, / Which, all their native gaiety forgot, / These Exiles tell—How Hope impell'd them on" (Curran, 157). In 1793 Smith's favorite daughter, Anna Augusta, had married Alexandre Marc-Constant de Foville, an aristocratic Royalist refugee whose estate had been seized. Even before Augusta met de Foville, Smith was allowing refugees to live in her home,[100] and she was aware of their past suffering and recognized that all French people, even the "victims," were being regarded with some horror by the English people, who were coping with less than ideal humanity. In the preface to the 1797 *Elegiac Sonnets* she observes, "It is, indeed, a melancholy truth, that at this time there is so much tragedy in real life, that those who having escaped private calamity, can withdraw their minds . . . and throw a transient veil over the extensive and still threatening desolation, that overspreads the country, and in some degree, every quarter of the world" (Curran, 11–12).

Book 2, however, foregrounds and develops the larger theme and overarching perspective that can only be described as *Weltschmerz:* ". . . my soul is pain'd /

By the variety of woes that Man / For Man creates" (Curran, 163). The great strength of the poem is the movement among the natural world, the human condition, the specific situation, and individual suffering people. The poem is punctuated by individual stories and lines such as "Lo! the suffering world" and "Such are thy dreadful trophies, savage War!" At almost every point Smith expands the range of her poem, as she does in these lines: "What is the promise of the infant year, / The lively verdure, or the bursting blooms, / To those, who shrink from horrors such as War / Spreads o'er the affrighted world?" (Curran, 151). The wording "horrors *such as* War Spreads" (emphasis mine) rather than "horrors War Spreads" makes war but one of the sources of suffering. The first of her notes to the poem draws attention to the women and children who had been sent to England from France and to those who, originally accompanied by husbands, were now alone because their husbands had joined a "disastrous" counter-revolutionary invasion. "The extent to which the rules made by men at once keep women dependent and leave them no recourse when left alone," she writes and thereby introduces the theme that she (and, therefore, many English women) and the "distressed emigrant" women are in the same situation. This statement is one of her first assertions about "the rules made by men" and the harsh, violent world created by men, "the variety of woes that Man / For Man creates."

Book 2 opens with a personal voice, thereby maintaining the complex layering and argument:

> Mournful and slow, along the wave-worn cliff,
> Pensive I took my solitary way,
> Lost in despondence, while contemplating
> Not my own wayward destiny alone,
> (Hard as it is, and difficult to bear!)
> But in beholding the unhappy lot
> Of the lorn Exiles. . . .
>
> (Curran, 149–50)

Several pages later a strongly autobiographical section, obviously alluding to those withholding her children's inheritance, opens up into an affirmation of her poetic commitment (she quotes Gray's "I gave to misery all I had, my tears") and then into happy lines that rise to God: ". . . *my prayer* was made / To him who hears even silence . . ." and "But on these hills, where boundless, yet distinct, / Even as a map, beneath are spread the fields, / His bounty cloaths" (162). There is something majestic, sad, and eternal about the poem, with its solemn opening, its

constant references to the rhythms of the sea and the seasons, and its acceptance of the universal suffering of humankind. She writes, ". . . the spectre Care, / That from the dawn of reason, follows still / Unhappy Mortals, 'till the friendly grave." In a section that resonates with biblical imagery and phrases, she soberly contrasts the world God intended with the one human beings have made:

> Yet He, whose Spirit into being call'd,
> This wond'rous World of Waters; He who bids
> The wild wind lift them till they dash the clouds,
> And speaks to them in thunder . . .
> . . . . . .
> Who, governing the Planets, also knows
> If but a Sea-Mew falls, . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . .Yet Man, misguided Man,
> Mars the fair work that he was bid enjoy,
> And makes himself the evil he deplores.
>
> (Curran, 136)

Adapting familiar biblical images of the creator God and passages such as "His eye is on the sparrow" to the setting, she composes an eternal perspective on the small scene of suffering on the coast that is emblematic, first, of the misery caused by the French Revolution and, second, of humankind that is given to war and avarice.

The poem is never far from the experiences of individual people and from its primary subject, England. In a psychologically acute image Smith describes the emigrants' looking across the "dim cold sea," "gazing on the waves / That seem to leave your shore," and the speaker recollects doing the same. More striking and original than these abstract sections are sudden, darting specific attacks. On the fashion for landscaping that made the poor and their hovels invisible she writes: "Close by the village Church (with care conceal'd / By verdant foliage, lest the poor man's grave / Should mar the smiling prospect of his Lord)"; and on the worker's alienation from the produce of his work: in France the poor "Produc'd the nectar he could seldom taste," and in England the man pens "the encreasing flock / Of his rich master in this sea-fenc'd isle." A lament for the earth and humankind, this strongly political poem daringly challenges English people to recognize themselves in the story of an insensitive, fabulously wealthy aristocracy oblivious to class tyrannies and as a nation perverting the ideals of a revolution.

On the surface, *Conversations Introducing Poetry; Chiefly on Subjects of Natural History for the Use of Children and Young Persons* (1804) seems to be completely different. A set of quite diverse and increasingly sophisticated poems arise from wide-ranging, prose "conversations" between a mother and her children. A fascinating and groundbreaking book, its original purpose, according to Smith, was to teach English to a child, but it is one of the first attempts in the language to teach the reading of poetry and give inside glimpses of the decisions working poets make. The child was half East Indian, the daughter of Smith's son who had been stationed in India for several years.[101] Because the child loved flowers and insects, Smith looked for "short and simple pieces on subjects of Natural History." Finding none, she collected some, wrote some, and got some from a "near relation," her sister Catherine Ann Dorset, who within a few years would "make a major name for herself as a children's author."[102] So different in tone from Pope in his sarcastic observation on poetry as an aid to learning ("What will a Child learn sooner than a song? / What better teach a Foreigner the tongue?" [Epistle 2.1.205–6]), Smith unselfconsciously assumes poetry's place in the culture and obviously loves both poetry and her imagined readers. Beyond teaching English, she is teaching botany, entomology, zoology, sociology, and morality. Judith Pascoe notes that this volume and others made Smith a major contributor to "what deserves to be recognized as a literary movement, a school of British women's writing merging poetry and science."[103]

Conversations is beautifully structured, gradually gaining sophistication in every educational domain. In "Conversation the First," a typical segment in form and content, the children, George and Emily, find a chafer, a kind of beetle, and Emily wants to keep it. Their mother, Mrs. Talbot, arrives and suggests, "Instead . . . of contriving the captivity of the chafer, let us address a little poem to it," which she does. In this short segment Smith mentions two respected poets (Cowper and Milton), introduces three popular poetic activities (reciting, writing, and reading poetry), and offers her first lesson on "understanding" poetry. Any English teacher would approve of the way she begins by asking the children if there are any words needing definition. Incidentally, the children rehearse plant parts. As in this section, throughout the text the behavior and habitat of insects, birds, and small animals are described briefly and with scrupulous accuracy and impressive detail. The careful reader would learn when and where to seek the subjects of her poems and something about the natural world and why its creatures behave as they do. In *Invitation to the bee*, for example, she writes, "Go and load thy tiny feet / With every rich and various sweet, / . . . / Dive in the woodbine's honied

horn" (Curran, 181). She gives Latin names and often corrects mistaken opinions, as she does with the hedgehog. She rehearses that it is much maligned with quotations from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* and attempts to correct myths about its diet: ". . . for thy food / Is but the beetle and the fly," not "the roots of corn" and milk from the udders of cows.[104]

The most startling aspects of the book are its blunt attacks on the lower and upper classes.[105] The subject opens with references to the thoughtless cruelty of humans, as in Emily's wanting to imprison the chafer. That conversation begins, however, with George remembering that he had rescued chafers "from the gardener's children yesterday, because [Emily] thought they were going to torment . . . them." George brings the hedgehog home because he is afraid it will be killed as another had been by "village boys," and the poem characterizes people harshly: "less fierce are ravenous beasts of prey."

The lower classes are thoughtlessly cruel to lower creatures—as are the upper classes, only those they injure are people. In volume 1 a perfectly disgusting rich boy comes to play with George. He brags that "when I am Sir Harry" he will have the best stud, curricle, and foxhounds in the county[106] and that he loves forcing his servant onto frisky horses: "he has had some tumbles, which almost killed me, I laughed so" (1:22). This play on "killed" takes on a more serious note when a poor girl falls into the river, and he expresses indignation that he would be asked to save a "beggar's brat." Mrs. Talbot supplies the tag: "There he goes, the echo of insolent wealth and unfeeling prosperity." Shortly afterwards, two gentlemen on their way to races run over the gardener's grandson, "an industrious boy, and just beginning to be a help to them," then "swore at him most terribly, struck at him with a whip, and then drove away faster than ever." Mrs. Talbot observes coldly, "They never think about poor people at all. . . . Self-gratification is their governing principle" (1:74–76). The "refuse" of fish that has been just one more dish to the rich becomes "the sole sustenance of several families of the poor" (2:128). In another place she explains to a hurt, confused Emily that the purpose of a woman's speech "was to inform you, that her father had a country-house, her mother a separate carriage, and *that* carriage a coach and four—in hand" (2:152). Volume 2 opens with a lesson in economics. People like themselves can no longer afford "the necessary articles of life" because of "the change of manners; the accumulation of wealth, which has made a great difference in the value of money; and wars, which have cost such immense sums to the nation" (2:4–5).

Above all, *Conversations* is a fascinating look into the mind of a working poet confident of her powers.[107] Smith continues her lessons in how to read; draws

upon the poetry of, among others, Shakespeare, Milton, Barbauld, Collins, Donne, Gray, Thomson, and Burns; often discusses meter and other technical elements; and includes substantive essays on Pope, epic and mock-epic poetry, and melancholy and poetic genius. She answers the charge that poetry is sometimes obscure by explaining poets' need to invert words and phrases and make other adjustments from the most common syntaxes for the sake of rhyme and meter (2:119–20). Several times she returns to allusion, personification, and apostrophe and incrementally encourages readers to master classical mythology.[108] The final poem in the book, *Flora*, turns the flowers and insects in the garden into an epic that overcomes the children's indifference to epic. Flora is a warrior queen, and the flowers and plants join her in an epic battle against insects.

The most impressive things about the poetry Smith includes are its variety and the subtle ways she keeps in play the fact that while some of her readers write poetry or want to, most will never write more than a few poems, if any. She tells Emily that the ability to write poetry "cannot perhaps be acquired." She is well aware, however, that oral reading and recitation are much appreciated social skills,[109] and her poetry and commentary are directed to them almost as much as to comprehending and writing poetry. She says in the preface that she has "endeavoured, as much as possible, to vary the measure, having observed, that a monotonous and drawling tone is acquired, by reciting continually from memory verses, selected without attention to variety of cadence" (1:iv). Both Emily and George read poems silently and aloud and memorize and recite others.

The poems include most of the subjects, moods, and forms enjoyed by Smith's contemporaries, and she lets her readers know that she is in dialogue with other poets and what subjects are challenging. Writing about butterflies is difficult because it is hard "to say any thing that is not mere common place on so obvious and hackneyed a subject." *The Early Butterfly*, which follows this comment, is highly original, has her rich, particular detail, and is in friendly dialogue with Gray both in its message and through its quotations within and immediately after the poem (1:42–44). She seems to glory in the challenge, as she includes other butterfly poems and describes nightingale poems as equally familiar poetic subjects. She returns to some subjects, as she does in *The Hot-House Rose*, a subtle dialogue between Nature and Art, and in poems on glowworms, bees, and butterflies. With *The Heath* she explains how difficult it is to write good blank verse, "which must be done by varying the pauses, and by a great deal of study and pains" (2:47–49). She surmises that Milton wrote blank verse with the facility she sometimes feels with lyric and heroic verse.

Comparing other poems with the rather mechanical poem *The Heath* affirms

her self-assessment and her commitment to giving her readers a delightful variety of verse forms. As might be expected, there are a number of fine sonnets and odes. The first poem in volume 2, *To the insect of the gossamer*, is an irregular Shakespearian sonnet that compares the poet to the insect and uses Miltonic emphasis well: "Thus on the golden thread that Fancy weaves / Buoyant. . . ." *Ode to the Missel Thrush* is a powerful uniting of sound and sense to celebrate the bird who contrasts to "The troop of timid warblers" that "shuddering wait for milder hours":

> While thou! the leader of their band,
> Fearless salut'st the opening year;
> Nor stay'st, till blow the breezes bland
> That bid the tender leaves appear:
> But, on some towering elm or pine,
> Waving elate thy dauntless wing,
> Thou joy'st thy love notes wild to sing,
> Impatient of St. Valentine!
>
> Oh, herald of the Spring! while yet
> No harebell scents the woodland lane,
> Nor starwort fair, nor violet,
> Braves the bleak gust and driving rain, . . .
> (Curran, 201)

Her poem captures something of the piercing melody of the bird's song as she tries to explain what its singing means to the winter-weary listener. The third and last verses end similarly:

> Some pensive wanderer sighs along,
> To soothe him with thy cheerful song,
> And tell of Hope and Fortitude!
> . . . . . .
> O, herald of approaching Spring,
> Shalt to the pensive wanderer sing
> Thy song of Hope and Fortitude.

This final verse repeats the "Oh, herald of the Spring" from the third line, and this interweaving of repeated lines and central images gives the poem unity and emotional force. The dramatic apostrophes that begin the verses, the metrical beauty, and the unusual rhyme scheme are the work of a poet fully in command of her craft

and dedicated to the strong reinforcement of sense with sound that her contemporary Clara Reeve held up as the ideal and struggled to achieve even briefly.[110]

In contrast to this sophisticated ode, there are deceptively spare but equally beautiful poems. *A Walk by the Water* is as simple as any ballad:

> Let us walk where reeds are growing,
> By the alders in the mead;
> Where the crystal streams are flowing,
> In whose waves the fishes feed.

This invitation is followed by verses describing what the walkers see in precisely chosen words. Alliteration and rhythm often mimic what the fish are doing:

> There the golden carp is laving,
> With the trout, the perch, and bream;
> Mark! their flexile fins are waving,
> As they glance along the stream.
>
> Now they sink in deeper billows,
> Now upon the surface rise;
> Or from under roots of willows,
> Dart to catch the water-flies.
>
> (Curran, 180)

As this poem suggests, Smith wrote some of the most polished, technically graceful lines of the century. One of the most unusual aspects of her poetry and a source of its beauty is her alertness to all five senses and her ability to invoke them sequentially, having one quickly displace another, thereby emphasizing the transitory nature of experience and life. She often brings together specific details to create an idyllic moment that is yet entirely composed of quite common sights and sounds. These poetic skills carry over into all of her poetry. In her fable *The Dictatorial Owl*, for instance, she depicts the May morning through a surprising variety of colors without resorting to mention of flowers and through the evocation of a variety of bird songs, including the unparalleled thrush's song:

> His nest amid the orchard's painted buds
> The bulfinch wove; and loudly sung the thrush
> In the green hawthorn; and the new-leav'd woods,
> The golden furze, and holly's guarded bush,
> With song resounded: tree-moss gray enchas'd

> The chaffinch's soft house; and the dark yew
> Receiv'd the hedge sparrow, that careful plac'd
> Within it's [*sic*] bosom eggs as brightly blue
> As the calm sky, or the unruffled deep.
> When not a cloud appears, and ev'n the Zephyrs sleep.
> (Curran, 255)

The final juxtaposition of the three shades of blue—of the eggs, the sky, and the sea—incrementally conveying the peace of the morning, is especially effective because of the way Smith has modified her favorite sonnet form, the Shakespearian, into two iambic pentameter quatrains and a final heroic couplet.

The final poems bring all of her themes and didactic purposes together. She admits that they are too long for most children, "but to those who have any knowledge of Geography or Mythology, or who have a taste for Botany, the two last pieces will not be found difficult" (1:iv). Between *Studies by the Sea* and *Flora* she writes a "progress of poetry" that even opens the subject of gendered reading tastes. *Studies by the Sea* also concludes her set of challenges to herself with "hackneyed" and difficult subjects. She intends in this poem to "refute the idea that the sea has no variety, but that which arises" from tides and storms. Just as the *Ode to the Missel Thrush* translated aural sensation into words, this poem sets out to translate unusual visual sensations into another medium. First she works with color, then with the seasons, and then with the creatures that depend on the sea for food. Smith's poems, including this one, and novels became more global as her sons scattered over the world. In the spacious penultimate verse she imagines the waves that she sees having touched India, the tropics, and the equator and having "raved to the Walruss's hollow roar" (2:134).

Smith's writing became increasingly political, and her means of inserting political debate and opinion are among the most varied and creative in a time when it seems that the novel regained its original position as one of the most important hegemonic apparatuses for political negotiation. The conclusion of *The Dead Beggar: an elegy, addressed to a lady, who was affected at seeing the funeral of a nameless pauper, buried at the expense of the parish at Brighthelmstone, in November 1792* (note date) shockingly concludes: "In earth's cold bosom, equall'd with the great, / Death vindicates the insulted rights of Man." By addressing the poem to this kind of person, one capable of being affected, and giving it the same date as she will give to the first part of *Beachy Head*, Smith is subtly demanding a standard of human brotherhood from her contemporaries in a time of world crisis.

Smith's deployment of poetry in her novels, beginning with her first, *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle* (1788), and introduction of more novelistic techniques into her poetry in major ways, beginning at least with *The Emigrants* (1793), are important means of asserting literary identity and expertise.[111] Marchmont in her novel of the same name (1796) is a descendent of Richard Lovelace, and his "Stone walls do not a prison make" is made to cut numerous ways in the novel.[112] He is imprisoned by numerous nonphysical things, such as his anxieties and poverty, and he and the heroine Althea contest Lovelace's faith in the honor of war. Althea describes war as transporting men "in floating prisons pregnant with infection and death" and forcing them to fight people "with whom they cannot have the slightest cause of quarrel."[113]

Reading *Desmond* and *The Emigrants* together suggests Smith's sophisticated understanding and use of genre differences as she develops her own political and social critiques and agendas. While the poem strives for detachment and even transcendence, the novels portray immersion in immediate reality, as the depiction of the roots and personal consequences of events in France do in *Desmond.* Orlando in *The Old Manor House* (1793) is in the British army fighting the Americans, and "There were, indeed, times when the modern directors of war appeared to him in a less favourable light [than those from antiquity]—who incurred no personal danger, nor gave themselves any other trouble than to raise money from one part of their subjects, in order to enable them to destroy another, or the subjects of some neighbouring potentate." The Americans were, of course, British subjects.[114] *The Banished Man* (1794) traces events on the Continent beginning in 1792, including the September massacre of French prisoners by mobs. A major character is in the Polish fight for independence. In fact, it is accurate to claim that Smith can well serve as the epitome of her time, which was a transition period in almost every way for Great Britain.

Although the novels show an impressive grasp of the times, current events, and the opinions—and the ideologies they represent—held by her contemporaries, Smith's poetry has the more sweeping perspectives, and she continued to develop the historical and prophetic dimensions of her poetry throughout her life. As Terence Hoagwood has observed, she "produced vigorous, intelligent, positive, and even profound social criticism in imaginative forms" and learned to create "a figurative depth involving both political history and the poetic imagination." Specifically, the poetic imagination has the power "to deal positively with political disillusionment."[115] *Beachy Head*, one of the last poems she wrote, brings

her narrative and poetic gifts together. It is, as John Anderson says, a "faithful rethinking, reforging, and assemblage of materials from the range of [her] reading and from her entire poetic career."[116]

Beachy Head opens with the speaker gazing across the Channel toward France. "On thy stupendous summit . . . / . . . / I would recline," she begins (Curran, 217). Smith, like most of her contemporaries, had had France on her mind, figuratively always looking across the Channel. Although an open optimist about the French Revolution, by 1793 she admits her own shaken confidence and the nation's growing repudiation of the revolution in *The Emigrants.* Once again, the perspective is a physically dominant historical and cultural one, and because she has habitually reclined on summits, watching and reflecting, her prerogative is reinforced.[117] The speaker moves through a recitation of early invaders, reviews the recent political history of England and Europe, gazes courageously at the wreckage from the revolutionary decades, and concludes with the simple story of a hermit, whose heart "Was feelingly alive to all that breath'd; / And outraged as he was, in sanguine youth, / By human crimes, he still acutely felt / For human misery" (Curran, 246). This symbolic figure has seen the tumults, the "crimes" on both sides of the Channel, and become "outraged" but has survived as a moral representative of the highest ideals of the person of sensibility.[118] Just as the novelists were doing, Smith integrates theories and systems into individual character creation, thereby not only testing them but also vaulting her writing into setting overarching moral standards.

Even the title is deeply suggestive. At the first glimpse of land English people called out, "Beachy": "In crossing the Channel from the coast of France, Beachy-Head is the first land made" (Smith's note, Curran, 217). Beachy Head is "where the Downs, the landscapes of her childhood, meet the sea," as well as "a notorious place for suicides since at least the seventh century." It was, for instance, Gloucester's destination in *King Lear.*[119] *Beachy Head* begins by invoking both an emotional experience and a specific place. Smith recalls the belief that France and England were before the dawn of history joined by land at this point, and her poem is about divisions, most more mental and historical than actual. Beachy Head is a fitting controlling metaphor. The sea motivates moral comment, as she describes the fishing boats and "The ship of commerce richly freighted" and contrasts the simple sailors with those who "for such gaudes and baubles, violate / The sacred freedom of his fellow man" (Curran, 218–19).

In spite of hundreds of lines of nature description, the poem is thickly popu-

lated, and the final anecdote is about a group of shepherds finding the body of the hermit. Farmers, cottagers in a village, individual shepherds, groups of shepherds, village maidens, even smugglers fill the poem. At one point Smith asks, "Ah! who *is* happy?" and answers, ". . . The boy / That on the river's margin gaily plays," "The village girl . . . who sets forth / To distant fair," "Her little brother," and "*I* once was happy, when while yet a child, / I learn'd to love these upland solitudes" (228). Many characters are deeply content, as is "The upland shepherd" who walks by a little stream and has a cottage garden, "most for use design'd, / Yet not of Beauty destitute" (230). Still working within Pope's concept of "what oft is thought but ne'er so well expressed," she rises to the challenge of reworking commonplaces masterfully:

> Oh! little knows the sturdy hind, who stands
> Gazing, with looks where envy and contempt
> Are often strangely mingled, on the car
> Where prosperous Fortune sits; what secret care
> Or sick satiety is often hid,
> Beneath the splendid outside: *He* knows not
> How frequently the child of Luxury
> Enjoying nothing, flies from place to place
> In chase of pleasure that eludes his grasp
>
> (227)

This verse is remarkable for its smooth, economical language and meter and also for its adept capture of the way the classes catch sight of each other and respond.

Smith's poetry is full of movement, and the rich flying "from place to place" contrasts strongly with the slow, deliberate pace of the country, where shepherds notice and have time to release birds from traps. The persona of Gray's *Elegy* is dramatized, imagined this time not by a hoary headed swain but by the village maidens to be a "poor youth" "cross'd in love." They find scraps of poetry he has written, and Smith finds a way to vary her poem from its controlling blank verse and another use for her enjoyment of writing poetry to express the values and thoughts of characters even as she continues to write in relationship to the great poets and poetry of her century.

Just as the poem moves horizontally to contrast the avaricious and the lowly, it constantly moves back to the invaders of Great Britain, especially the Romans and the Normans, and forward to admonishments and prophesy. Few poems

express the moods, the warring literary and political currents, and the mind of the 1790s as thoroughly as *Beachy Head.* Smith warns:

> But let not modern Gallia form from hence
> Presumptuous hopes, that ever thou again,
> Queen of the isles! shalt crouch to foreign arms.
> The enervate sons of Italy may yield;
> And the Iberian, all his trophies torn
> And wrapped in Superstition's monkish weed,
> May shelter his abasement, and put on
> Degrading fetters. Never, never thou!
> Imperial mistress of the obedient sea;
> But thou, in thy integrity secure,
> Shalt now undaunted meet a world in arms.
>
> (223)

Deeply political, these passages are saturated in values and in unusual selection of detail. Smith depicts Claudius, the Roman emperor who made Britain his province in A.D. 43, as coming to fight with elephants. Creatively depicting the reaction of the elephant, perhaps encouraging her readers to remember that a skeleton of one had recently been discovered, Smith writes:

> Auxiliary reluctant, hither led,
> From Afric's forest glooms and tawny sands,
> First felt the Northern blast, and his vast frame
> Sunk useless
> . . . . .
> Hither, Ambition come!
> Come and behold the nothingness of all
> For which you carry thro' the oppressed Earth,
> War, and its train of horrors — see where tread
> The innumerous hoofs of flocks above the works
> By which the warrior sought to register
> His glory, and immortalize his name —
>
> (234–35)

Having experienced internal divisions, the American and French revolutions, and the threat of Napoleon, Smith goes back to the values expressed in Gray's

great *Elegy*, affirms their permanence, and invigorates them with the defiance of France that England's situation required. She writes, "The Conqueror's successors fiercely fought, / Tearing with civil feuds the desolate land. / But now a tiller of the soil dwells there, / . . . / . . . Where he sees, / Instead of armed foemen, herds that graze / Along his yellow meadows" (238–39). Moving easily from the sublime to the poetry of simple rural life made so familiar during the last decades of the century, she captures a moment of great national anxiety, one quite precisely aware of how much could be lost even as such things as Great Britain's global economy were taken for granted.[120] Examining the sonnets that she added edition by edition—twenty to the third edition, sixteen to the fifth, fourteen to the sixth, forty to the two-volume seventh, and twelve more to the second volume of the eighth—reveals the extent to which they were the soil in which she nurtured the themes, strategies, and force of *Beachy Head*.[121] Many of these sonnets were from the novels' most political moments, and others, such as *Written in September 1791*, added to the sixth edition, were profound contributions to her musings on revolution.

Smith as Transitional Poet

Smith is a fascinating transitional figure. She can use the language, allusions, and restraint of the great Augustan poets, and she can write trembling sublime and extravagant gothic descriptions. Daniel White has said that her "appropriation of Thomas Gray's mid-century 'elegiac poetics' represents a crucial genealogical link between the eighteenth-century and both traditional 'ideal' romanticisms and the 'other' romanticisms that have emerged from contemporary feminist and materialist criticism."[122] Some of her best-known poetry is indeed firmly within the eighteenth-century "graveyard," melancholy category; some captures the gothic moods and modes that swept the nation in the 1790s, and some could easily have been written in the high Romantic period. "O'er the dark waves the winds tempestous howl; / The screaming sea-bird quits the troubled sea: / But the wild gloomy scene has charms for me, / And suits the mournful temper of my soul," she writes in *Written on the Sea Shore—October, 1784* (Curran, 20). This poem seems to have been conceived in the structures of feeling of the eighteenth century, partakes of the extreme emotions and unquiet minds of the Gothic mode, yet contains a mature expression of Romantic feeling and identity, especially in the final line quoted.

The sensibility, transitions, and rhythms of Coleridge, Keats, and Byron are in

this easy, graceful verse, yet Smith's craft can be firmly traced to Milton's sentence structures: "Musing, my solitary seat I take, / And listen to the deep and solemn roar" (Curran, 20). In her combining of descriptive, historical, and didactic writing she can be related back to *Cooper's Hill* and forward to Wordsworth.[123] The first two editions of *Elegiac Sonnets* are filled with the modes, imagery, and Latinate language of the Augustans, but by the fifth and sixth editions there is more emphasis on the picturesque and the sublime, and the language of many poems seldom rises above ordinary speech. In the ninth, poems such as the ballad *Lydia* signal Smith's increasingly Romantic orientation. Comparisons between *The Emigrants* and *Beachy Head* are especially telling. Yet her range and importance to studies of continuity and adaptation are greater still. Sometimes she seems to stand between the great Metaphysicals, awakening echoes of John Donne, no mean practitioner of the sonnet, and the Romantics and Victorians, who were "half in love with easeful Death."[124]

> Come, balmy Sleep! tired Nature's soft resort!
> On these sad temples all thy poppies shed;
> And bid gay dreams, from Morpheus' airy court,
> Float in light vision round my aching head!
> Secure of all thy blessings, partial Power!
> On his hard bed the peasant throws him down;
> And the poor sea-boy, in the rudest hour,
> Enjoys thee more than he who wears a crown.
> Clasp'd in her faithful shepherd's guardian arms,
> Well may the village-girl sweet slumbers prove;
> And they, O gentle Sleep! still taste thy charms,
> Who wake to labour, liberty, and love.
> But still thy opiate aid dost thou deny
> To calm the anxious breast, to close the streaming eye.
>
> (Curran, 19–20)

In her *Ode to Death* Smith, like Donne, versifies Bacon's "Death is no such formidable enemy": "Friend of the wretched! wherefore should the eye / Of blank Despair, whence tears have ceased to flow, / Be turn'd from thee?" she begins. This poem, which also recalls Samuel Daniel's sonnet *Care-Charmer Sleep*, suggests Smith's wide reading and that she was taking part in the revival of interest in the lesser-known Elizabethan poets.[125]

In more cheerful poetry Smith can reach back to the Renaissance conception

of the world as one of God's two books given to humankind while at the same moment joining Burns in emphatic descriptions of little living creatures, describing as he might, ". . . for his heart / Was feelingly alive to all that breath'd" (*Beachy Head*, in Curran, 246). *A Walk by the Water* concludes,

> Do not dread us, timid fishes,
> We have neither net nor hook;
> Wanderers we, whose only wishes
> Are to read in nature's book.
> (180)

As it is for the Romantics, childhood is consistently and variously important to her. In Sonnet XLV she describes early poetic inspiration where "My early vows were paid to Nature's shrine, / When thoughtless joy, and infant hope were mine." In *The Emigrants* she will imply that she could not have written it "without the experience of childhood joy and later pain."[126] She describes herself as "An early worshipper at Nature's shrine" in *Beachy Head*, and her memory passes over "cottage gardens" and "Nature's ruder scenes" (231). "Ah! hills so early loved! in fancy still / I breathe your pure keen air; and still behold / Those widely spreading views, mocking alike / The Poet and Painter's utmost art," she writes in lines that proclaim the sister art movement of the eighteenth century inferior to "fancy," which is superior to both memory and imagination because a combination of both. She writes especially well about the state of mind in which all the senses are alive to a world to be explored in innocence and excitement, as in these lines from Sonnet LVIII, *The Glow-worm:* "When on some balmy-breathing night of Spring / The happy child, to whom the world is new, / Pursues the evening moth. . . ." Stuart Curran has called her "the first poet in England whom in retrospect we would call Romantic."[127]

It has frequently been said that Keats and Shelley pushed the sonnet toward the ode, but in content and technique this too was one of Smith's innovations and transitional elements.[128] Simply paging through her sonnets and noting her use of indentation and quatrain and sestet forms affirms the consanguinity. At the time she began writing, besides the great odes of poets such as Collins there were hundreds, perhaps thousands, of exceptionally mediocre odes on fancy, hope, despair, rivers, gardens, nightingales, seascapes, the moon, and recent sicknesses. These odes (and many poems written in other forms) partook of the time's taste for many things—sensibility, art describing nature, and somber tones. Smith let all of these things flow into her sonnets and impressively compressed them. In

doing so she transformed "mood poetry," the poetry of time and place, and laid bare the serious underpinnings and implications of sensibility. Compared with Bowles and other practitioners of the sonnet before 1790, she consistently asserts a moral, even social and political, vision and achieves what Brent Raycroft has recognized as "dramatic immediacy" and "emotional pitch."[129]

A fruitful comparison is one between Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* and T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* and the sensibility that made him write it and other "death of civilization" poems. Like Eliot, Smith came to apprehend her time as one strange and even unprecedented, one compromising long-held, comfortable values and beliefs. Losing America, the "mad" king, the Gordon and football and bread riots, the French Revolution, the Reign of Terror, and the Napoleonic Wars are very much the backdrop for her sonnets. Both Smith and Eliot created an isolated sensibility in an alien and threatening world. Their poems are dialectics between the individual and the world. The product of a time and a sensibility's experiences just as *The Waste Land* is, *Elegiac Sonnets* strives toward the achievement of the prophet-bard.

Yet it is much more accurate to recognize Smith as very much an eighteenth-century woman poet. I will offer but two examples of her important place within a stream of earlier women poets. First, she continued adapting such feminine forms as the friendship poem, transforming it, extending its cultural and personal usefulness, and demonstrating that its subject and themes were serious enough to be treated in the kinds of poetry having the most cultural capital. Some of her most melodic verse is about friendship, as is the middle quatrain of Sonnet XXVIII, *To Friendship:* "Like the fair moon, thy mild and genuine ray / Thro' Life's long evening shall unclouded last; / While Pleasure's frail attachments fleet away, / As fades the rainbow from the northern blast!" This comparison is a reanimation of familiar images, but she can also find wholly original ways to express the bond of friendship. Although perhaps over the top, *The captive escaped in the wilds of America. Addressed to the Hon. Mrs. O'Neill* is an example:

> If, by his torturing, savage foes untraced,
> The breathless Captive gain some trackless glade,
> Yet hears the war-whoop howl along the waste,
> And dreads the reptile-monsters of the shade;
> The giant reeds that murmur round the flood,
> Seem to conceal some hideous form beneath;
> And every hollow blast that shakes the wood,

Speaks to his trembling heart of woe and death.
With horror fraught, and desolate dismay,
On such a wanderer falls the starless night;
But if, far streaming, a propitious ray
Leads to some amicable fort his sight,
He hails the beam benign that guides his way,
As I, my Harriet, bless thy friendship's cheering light.
(Curran, 50)

This startling ending, that Harriet's friendship is a refuge on a par with one a pursued, desperate captive might find after a harrowing run through the American wilderness, catches the reader by surprise but certainly emphasizes the importance of the friendship to Smith. Even here Smith keeps the perspective and thematic unity of her sonnet sequence: "With horror fraught, and desolate dismay, / On such a *wanderer* falls the starless night" (emphasis mine). Other women were doing the same, as Anna Seward does in *To Honora Sneyd, Whose Health was always Best in Winter*, a poem in which she praises the spring but then concludes,

For thy dear sake, to me less pleasure yield
Than, veil'd in sleet, and rain, and hoary rime,
Dim Winter's naked hedge and plashy field.
(Scott, 3:125)

None of them, however, competes with Smith's startlingly innovative ability to turn the form on its head by using it for women's traditional kinds of poetry. An experimental triumph, *Reflections on some drawings of plants* (Sonnet XCI) adapts the Petrarchan form and then transforms it into a woman's form. The poem is about her daughter Anna Augusta, who died in childbirth, and its perspective is that of a mother. She muses,

I can in groups these mimic flowers compose,
These bells and golden eyes, embathed in dew;
Catch the soft blush that warms the early Rose,
Or the pale Iris cloud with veins of blue;
Copy the scallop'd leaves, and downy stems,
And bid the pencil's varied shades arrest
Spring's humid buds, and Summer's musky gems:
But, save the portrait on my bleeding breast,
I have no semblance of that form adored,

That form, expressive of a soul divine,
So early blighted; and while life is mine,
With fond regret, and ceaseless grief deplored—
That grief, my angel! with too faithful art
Enshrines thy image in thy Mother's heart.
(Curran, 77–78)

When we remember that Petrarch is writing about absence, the *dead* Laura, we see that this sonnet about Smith's dead daughter is a self-conscious transformation of the tradition.

Part of the impact of the poem comes from the quiet beginning, which is an apparently leisurely depiction of the very feminine painting of plants and flowers. As so often happens in her poems, the volta is startling. The "bleeding breast" jolts the image from a popular representation of a contented woman's peaceful pastime into the reality of women's maternal experience and the symbol of their sex, the breast. The final couplet is another revision of the conventions. Although there was no portrait, for lack of time or money and because, apparently, she could not paint one, the image is "with too faithful art" vivid on the canvas that is her "Mother's heart" and breast.[130] Rather than a regret for the lack of an image, the poem reveals that the image is too painfully distinct. Within poems on overworked subjects *(To Hope, To Fancy)* her transitions, as in this poem, are often unexpected and have striking effect. What begins as a scaled-down sister-arts poem that draws upon the time's and women's interest in botany has a dramatic Petrarchan turn, "But, save the portrait on my bleeding breast / I have no semblance of that form adored." When the poem is reread with its conclusion in mind, the traditional Petrarchan imagery for women is emphatic: "soft blush," "veins of blue," comparisons to the rose. Even the word "form" is Petrarchan.

Second, she joins a group of women poets for whom Enlightenment allegiances and themes were central. Anne Finch, Mary Chudleigh, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Mary Masters, Jane Brereton, and especially Elizabeth Carter believed that reason was the noblest operation of the human mind, and that operation habitually culminated in critique, what Kant summarized in 1781 when he wrote, "Our age is, to a preeminent degree, the age of criticism, and to criticism everything must submit."[131] Chudleigh's essay "Of Knowledge" begins, "When I look abroad into the World, and take a Survey of the Rational Nature . . ."[132] She shows considerable knowledge of history and impressive understanding of the European Enlightenment movement, as she mentions the German Princess

Elizabeth of Hanover, a student of Descartes, and Anne Dacier in France. *The Ladies Defense* (1701) includes a sweeping passage in which Melissa champions women's reading and concludes, " 'Tis in our Minds that we wou'd Rule alone: / Those unseen Empires give us leave to Sway, / And to our Reason private Homage pay." Expressing the optimism of the early Enlightenment, Chudleigh believes she can

> Trace the first Heroes to their dark Abodes,
> And find the Origine of Men and Gods:
> See Empires rise, and Monarchies decay,
> And all the Changes of the World survey,
> The ancient and the modern Fate of Kings,
> From whence their Glory, or Misfortune springs.
>
> (Ezell, 34)

Through Smith, we can see more clearly Carter's place in a line of bearers of Enlightenment ideas and her contribution to the Romantic movement. In Carter's *To —. 1748* (chap. 6, above, in "Memory, Time, and Elizabeth Carter") we see the same unusual identification of the moon with transcendent reason and understanding. Reason is central to this poem, the foundation of the image of contented happiness of the conclusion, and the bridge between "the Music of the Mind" and the harmony of the spheres, an all-permeating divine order. Evening, reflection, and reason are inseparable in these poems, as they are in Smith's, and lead to philosophical calm and, often, to faith in God. The echo of Rowe is unmistakable. Enlightenment optimism permeates women's work throughout the century. In the preface to her sonnet sequence *Sappho and Phaon* (1796) Mary Robinson compares the past with her own and challenges her nation:

> It is the interest of the ignorant and powerful, to suppress the effusions of enlightened minds; when only monks could write, and nobles read, authority rose triumphant over right. . . . It was then that the best powers of reason lay buried like the gem in the dark mine; . . . for that era is rapidly advancing, when talents will tower like an unperishable column, while the globe will be strewed with the wrecks of superstition.[133]

To survey the critical literature suggests how completely these women poets are being embraced by Romanticists and largely ignored by eighteenth-century critics and scholars. Yet critics from Samuel Holt Monk in 1939 to Anne Mellor in

1995 have pointed out how, in their criticism, these women replicate the thought and opinions of the *eighteenth* century.[134] They privilege literature, thought, and actions that incorporated a balance between head and heart far longer and more consistently than their male contemporaries in their poetry, as well as in their criticism. Amid a growing love for "Fancy," they continued to celebrate Reason over the other qualities of the mind in the paradigm of faculty psychology, Memory and Fancy.[135] Mary Robinson's poems on poetry, as well as her sonnet sequence, praise Reason and consider it as important as taste and fancy to the poet. Even in a stereotypically Romantic metrical tale, with its gothic setting ("these lone piles by vesper's silver light"), Mary Darwall's speaker brushes aside the superstitious folk who hear restless spirits and concludes, "But reason's eye in other light surveys / This mould'ring monument of earthly state."[136]

The contrasts between the women poets discussed in this chapter and both the major male Romantics and the women poets identified with Felicia Hemans and Letitia Landon are obvious. Poets—and especially these women—had a sense of a large, engaged audience. As they and their poetry became more politicized, they became a deliberative body, one that the Romantics would take some pains to disperse and discredit. By forging the tastes of their time for sentimentalism, melancholy, humanitarianism, terror, wild scenery, and the "cult of the picturesque" into original, revisionary poetry with designs on the public, they provided modern critics with the means of dismissing them. Yet as creative writers they are being studied as Romantics. By extension, Suvir Kaul's work suggests why this is a mistake: "These poems [Restoration and eighteenth-century] do not, as romantic poems often do, call attention to the world only to disavow its noise and clutter and enlarge into explorations of poetic subjectivity and the growth of the poet's mind. They are of their world and their nation."[137] It is a commonplace to say that periodicity is breaking down in literary studies, but it is more accurate to say that the lines of demarcation are changing. The Romanticists speak of "the expanded Romantic period" (usually 1770-1840), and we claim "the long eighteenth century" (sometimes a mind-boggling 1638–1840). These instabilities seem to me to be evidence of the need for a more subtle, variegated mapping of the literary landscape and of the literary history of poetry. The work of Smith and her generation argues strongly for a fundamental rethinking, a sustained study of a longer sweep of time that moves back as well as forward, and a rigorous analysis of each of the forms in which women (and their male contemporaries) were writing.

Harking back to the Enlightenment's faith in reason and drawing upon the

movement that was already establishing woman as moral center, this generation of poets combined sensibility with carefully argued critiques, critiques that quietly insisted that universal Reason would see things their way. They reconstructed poetic forms into Enlightenment critiques. They used their art not only to produce melodious poetry with telling images but to move their readers to moral positions. Their century invented modern political propaganda, and one of the central lessons learned was that the successful propagandist draws heavily from the time's popular genres. Like sensibility and the friendship poem, popular art is often denigrated, and its aesthetics ephemerally accepted if not altogether denied. Recent criticism, primarily on the novel, has established the degree to which the sensibility movement became a major moral movement, but the prestigious legacy in poetry has been neglected. Part of the rise in Milton's stature came about because of a growing appreciation of his reputation for moral courage. As Wordsworth wrote in the 1805 *Prelude*, "our blind Poet, who, in his later day, / Stood almost single, uttering odious truth, / Darkness before, and danger's voice behind; / Soul awful!" (Book 3, lines 284–87).

Poets such as Pope and Johnson had insisted upon the Poet's high calling as a judge and prophet, and the women poets at the end of the century took up this calling. Startling as this statement is, few would argue that the poetry of sensibility had the cultural capital of satire. It is possible to claim that these women's poems were more effective than Pope's satire. From this position, for instance, Anna Seward brought George Washington's envoy to her knees over the hanging of Major André, and women like Hannah More established themselves as "the conscience of culture."[138] As Coleridge's own *Sonnets on Eminent Characters* demonstrates,[139] by that time sonnet writers had laid bare the serious underpinnings of sensibility and used it for the most serious personal, social, and political causes. The political nature of Coleridge's sonnets is clear both in their content and in their addressees. The first begins, "When British Freedom for an happier land / Spread her broad wings. . . ." Among the addressees are William Pitt, the Marquis de Lafayette, and Edmund Burke. Mary A. Favret points out that by the Romantic period women identified with social movements and believed that "poetry presented itself as an effective means for women to address, instruct, woo, and chastise their audience. . . . a movement with historical vision and ambitions to transform society."[140]

Increasingly there was a global perspective and sense of the poet's responsibility. The combination of Reason, sensibility, and melodramatic metrical tale was exactly what the abolitionist poets, including Williams, Yearsley, More, and

other poets, counted on and replicated in their passionate poems. Harriet Guest points out that Helen Maria Williams followed some of Seward's arguments about the reciprocal private and public costs of war in poems such as *Ode on the Peace*. She explains that the women identified "imperial honor not with conquest or the ideal manliness of the struggle for liberty, but with sentimental humanity." They portrayed "domestic affections" as victims of war. She continues, "The *Ode* asserts that it is because the British nation is capable of participating in the grief of individuals . . . that peace finally comes about."[141] The Enlightenment was born in idealistic dreams of liberty, and it is appropriate that it crashed, burned, and rose again in celebrations of liberty at the end of the century.

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

> O lovely Sisters! well it shows
> How wide and fair your bounty flows.
> — JOANNA BAILLIE

Much has been made of the barriers to women's writing poetry. Catharine Trotter Cockburn, one of the most intelligent, educated, and well read, wrote in 1737,

> Than those restraints which have our sex confin'd,
> While partial custom checks the soaring mind.
> Learning deny'd us, we at random tread
> Unbeaten paths, that late to knowledge lead;
> By secret steps break thro' th' obstructed way,
> Nor dare acquirements gain'd by stealth display.
> If some advent'rous genius rare arise,
> Who on exalted themes here talents tries,
> She fears to give the work (tho' prais'd) a name,
> And flies not more from infamy, than fame.[1]

These lines, published in 1737, capture almost all of the barriers women themselves felt, and most of them were conventions before and after Cockburn wrote them. Two on her list are commonplaces today, but although she was married and had four children, she does not mention domestic responsibilities, one of the

most frequently invoked reasons that women lacked — or should not take — the time to write.

By this time Cockburn had been a successful playwright, author of a popular epistolary fiction, a correspondent of John Locke and Gottfried Leibnitz, and the publisher of philosophical tracts that were read and praised by these men and others. The first woman since Aphra Behn to have a tragedy produced at a royal theater, she was befriended by William Congreve and Charles, Earl of Dorset. Women playwrights largely gained access to production and publication through friends such as these and through strong networks of actors and managers. Cockburn had absorbed this lesson, as Aphra Behn, Susannah Centlivre, Elizabeth Inchbald, Hannah More, and dozens of women poets did. The theater was something of a rough-and-tumble world where such categories as gender and "respectable" were quite different from those in daily life and in the milieu for poets, but some conventions were usefully transferred. This poem recalls the dramatic prologues and epilogues that Cockburn knew so well in that it is a plea both for fair play and for chivalry.

How great were the barriers to writing poetry for women? Germaine Greer remarks tartly, "Homer and Milton were blind; can we claim that being female is a worse handicap than being blind?"[2] Charlotte Smith had twelve children, and her literary output is formidable. Her scattered comments about being a mother and an "Authoress" express a comfortable integration of these identities, and some of her most powerful poetry turns her private experiences into expressions of the human condition. A number of her sonnets and two of her odes are animated by her grief over the death of her daughter Anna Augusta de Foville, and *Beachy Head* includes a brief mention of her son's loss of a leg in war, a circumstance that supplied thematic material for this poem and others. Certainly domestic responsibilities affected many women. Although lists of unmarried women (the poets Susanna Blamire, Elizabeth Carter, Mary Chandler, Mary Collier, Mary Jones, Mary Leapor, Clara Reeve, Hannah More, Joanna Baillie, and Anna Seward, among others) and married women without children (Hester Chapone, Anne Finch, Sarah Fyge Egerton, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Amelia Opie) are impressively long, women in these categories often had times of considerable responsibility for the care of ailing, aged parents or other relatives. Helen Maria Williams, for instance, reared her sister's two sons; Barbauld adopted a nephew, and her husband went mad; and Anna Seward took care of her father, who for the last ten years suffered from paralytic and apoplectic strokes that "gradually impaired the tone of his mind."[3]

A considerable amount of evidence survives that domestic situations encouraged poets' writing and that families often took pride in a daughter's, wife's, or mother's poetry. Volumes of poetry were carefully collected by relatives and published with some difficulty. Heneage Finch, Anne's husband, copied out almost every poem in the manuscripts of her poetry and compiled the important folio manuscript; throughout her life he encouraged her writing and took an active interest in it.[4] Mary Monck's poetry would be lost were it not for her father, who published her poems, which he described as "the product of the leisure hours of a young gentlewoman" (Fullard, 561), and Octavia Walsh's family collected her poems into a manuscript they called "The Private Entertainment of Mrs. Octavia Walsh in her Vacant Hours" (Lonsdale, 52–53).

For some women, domestic responsibilities competed painfully with the desire to write, but for others—perhaps an equal number—the desire to write poetry faded or could be exercised in occasional poems, some directed to the children or about them, or in work that took longer or came in creative flashes. Mary Whateley Darwall married a man with six children and had six more, and one of her poems captures the experience of domesticity for some women. She, like many, many other women poets, was actively encouraged to write, and her poems were praised and appreciated by her family, many of whom pushed for publication. Her *On the Author's Husband Desiring her to Write Some Verses* preserves her willingness to put poetry aside for the pleasure she is finding in her children. She takes as her subject "Connubial Love! enchanting theme!" and writes several verses of a delightful ode on the subject and then breaks off, "—But hark!— my darling infant cries, / And each poetic fancy flies." Poetry is flight and imagination; the "darling infant" is solid and pleasing reality. The stability of a home as Finch came to have surely made for a more conducive situation for writing than, for instance, Mary Darwall's wanderings in old age or Mary Chandler's work establishing a millinery shop, which she ran for thirty-five years.[5]

Despite their reputation for being maudlin and trivial, excellent poems about children, with considerable musicality and power, survive, as lines such as these by Maria Cowper Madan demonstrate: "Who, to view thy peaceful form, / Heeds the winter-blowing storm? / Thy smiles the calm of heaven bestow. . . ."[6] Ben Jonson is well known for his moving poem on his son, but Mehetabel Wright's *To an Infant Expiring the Second Day of its Birth* (1733) is forgotten in spite of its tactile richness and powerful emotion: "Tender softness, infant mild, / Perfect, purest, brightest child; / . . . / Blooming, withering in an hour . . ." (Lonsdale, 115). In focusing on the handicap that domestic life can be, all but a

few critics and readers have missed the unbroken strain of delightful, gritty, often comic poems of common life that today are classified as "domestic." A few, such as Barbauld's *Washing Day* and Mary Collier's *Woman's Labour* are often anthologized, and some attention has been given to poems considered to exemplify Jonathan Swift's influence.[7] However, astonishing variety and numerous very high-quality poems mark this category. Mary Jones and Mary Barber wrote witty, lyrical invitation poems. Poems like Finch's *Goute and the Spider* and Sarah Dixon's *Slattern* poke fun at human pretentiousness and are filled with acutely observed, homely detail. In these poems the rival to the shady grove was the fireside, and the counterpoint to pristine paths and banks by streams the teeming, often raucous and dirty world of work, getting and spending, and city pastimes. In *The Rural Maid in London* Elizabeth Hands describes the fashionable people's conduct upon rising at noon: "To the dear looking-glass due homage pay, / Look o'er the play-bills while they sip their tea."[8]

Many domestic poems juxtapose the public and private in astute or subversive ways. Rather than creating the snug, insulated women's counteruniverse, many women poets addressed their women friends in poems on topical, public events. Ann Thomas's jovial, idiomatic *To Laura*, *On the French Fleet parading before Plymouth in August 1779* (1784) is written in the serviceable iambic tetrameter couplets so common in light verse in the period. It tells of Thomas's visit to the English military camp and ends with an intimate picture of the two women's visits to each other. Laura hopes, should she be the visitor, she could bring nuts and "good red-streaked apples" back with her. This reference to England's bounty and the love of their country testifies both to Britain's solid prosperity and to the consolidation of a national identity that continues to resonate in "forever England" poems. How aware women were of political happenings is often apparent in brief, startling passages in common-life poems. Elizabeth Tollet's lovely poem *To my Brother at St. John's College in Cambridge*, with its beautiful descriptions of the views from the Tower of London and around Cambridge and its concluding tribute to Robert Harley, is a fine example of the seamless melding of political comment and other poetic kinds.

"Learning deny'd us," Cockburn writes, and the lack of education or the type of education given women is the second major reputed barrier to women's writing poetry. As a number of women writers then and now have pointed out, many male writers had no more education and access to books than many women, perhaps especially the daughters of noblemen, judges, and clergymen. Mehetabel Wesley Wright and Elizabeth Carter were educated with, and in the same way as, their

brothers; Hannah More and her sisters were given superb educations because their father was preparing them to teach; and Elizabeth Tollet was carefully educated with Isaac Newton's encouragement by her father, who observed "her extraordinary genius," as Anna Seward was with the encouragement of Erasmus Darwin.[9] As we have seen, most of the women poets of Anne Finch's generation were gently bred and educated and had exceptional access to books. The increasingly prosperous middle-class tradesmen, especially Dissenters, spent considerable time and effort on their daughters' educations, as Ann Murry's wine merchant father did. In any event, the equality of these educations ended at the university level. Of course, some were actively discouraged—at least two women poets had parents who did not even want them to learn to read, and Chapone was impeded by her mother. But John Locke had recommended that any "Poetic Vein" in children should be "stifled, and suppressed, as much as may be," and he was surely speaking of boys.[10] We read of women who struggled to learn the classical languages and literature or of others who were deeply grateful to fathers, brothers, or tutors who taught them, and it could be demonstrated that most women poets who use classical forms learned them from English poets, not the Latin and Greek originals, and without access to the expensive editions with elaborate apparatuses.[11] This circumstance might, however, explain women's significant contributions to the development of distinctively English forms of poetic kinds.

Not surprisingly, the more privileged women are the most aware of the unevenness of their educations.[12] Reflective, gently poignant lines on this topic often creep into poems on a variety of subjects. Catherine Cockburn writes, "we at random tread." A number of poems convey a feeling of looking through an impenetrable glass and achieve a beauty of form to match the pleasure they are briefly experiencing or imagining. Laetitia Pilkington's *Verses Wrote in a Library* (1748) begins, "Seat for contemplation fit, / Sacred nursery of wit! / Let me here enwrapped in pleasure, / Taste the sweets of learned leisure." Elizabeth Teft's lovely *On Learning* shows an understanding of some of the greatest values of learning:

> I the first founders of great Rome would know
> . . . . . .
> Search out the nature of all things below,
> From what great causes dire effects do flow;
> In conference with deathless Homer be,
> And Virgil's thoughts, and Milton's poetry.
>
> (Lonsdale, 218)

Much attention, especially since the publication of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic*, has been directed as the disadvantages women poets faced because of discouraging, censorious attitudes toward their writing. Even though Anna Seward's father published *The Female Right to Literature*, she was put to sewing to occupy the time she had been using to write poetry. Her editor, Sir Walter Scott, remarked, "At this time [about 1754], however, literature was deemed an undesirable pursuit for a young lady in Miss Seward's situation,— the heiress of an independent fortune, and destined to occupy a considerable rank in society" (Scott, 1:vii). Mary Masters described herself as "brow-beat and discountenanced by her parents" for writing poetry.[13] With the barriers of such sanctions on their use of time, more limited ability to select reading materials for themselves, and the obvious disadvantages in education, Cockburn's "partial custom" takes its place. Cockburn writes of flying infamy and fame, and the sentiment is ubiquitous. The well-received Anne Finch wrote, "Alas! a woman that attempts the pen, / Such an intruder on the rights of men, / Such a presumptuous creature is esteem'd, / The fault can by no virtue be redeem'd" (Reynolds, 4–5). Clara Reeve, who later declared it respectable to be a woman writer, wrote, "As youth advanced, I dared aspire, / And trembling struck the heavenly lyre; / What by my talents have I gained? / By those I love to be disdained, / By some despised, by others feared." Her fate, she says, was "As owls are shown, but to be hooted."[14]

This barrier too needs scrutiny and qualification beyond the important corrective that Margaret Ezell's work on manuscript circulation began.[15] I have found, with Ezell, that careful reading of women's poetry explodes the idea that female authors were "traditionally at odds with their society and with themselves simply because of the activity of authorship itself."[16] Rosalind Ballaster, David Oakleaf, and others have pointed out how nastily writers were treated regardless of their sex, and the women's poetry with this message often describes a moment or one of many responses rather than the uniform condition of writing for women in the century. Finch's and Cockburn's poems, for instance, were written shortly before an influx of virtuous women writers, and both were respected and praised for their writing. Mary Masters published her first volume of poetry as *Poems on Several Occasions. By a Young Gentleman* in 1724, but the 1733 edition proudly carries her name. The reception of women differed not only from decade to decade, from one woman to another, but in an individual's experience from one moment to another. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was viciously attacked by Pope, *and* her poems were anthologized in the most prestigious places. As we

have seen, by the end of the century women poets were being recognized as one of the glories of the British nation.

Attitudes toward women writers remained ambivalent and even contradictory, however. John Dryden wrote unselfconsciously to Elizabeth Thomas, "Your Verses were, I thought, too good to be a Woman's."[17] Samuel Johnson was a generous mentor to a number of women writers, including Charlotte Lennox, and yet he made many derogatory remarks in conversation and print about the category of women writers, as well as about individuals, and called them "a generation of Amazons of the pen" seemingly "resolved to contest the usurpations of virility."[18] Among the most amazing signs of ambivalence is a "dream" narrated to puff *Poems by Eminent Ladies* in which the editors stage a contest in which women writers must ride Pegasus to demonstrate their equality with men. A tone of wonder introduces the piece in *The Connoisseur:* "I was agreeably surprised . . . ," "I never imagined, that one nation could boast so many excellent Poetesses. . . ."[19] Behn "clapped her hand upon the side-saddle, and with a spring leaped across it, saying that she would never ride him but astride," and Pilkington "boldly jumped in the saddle" (413, 414). As Richard Terry says, Colman and Thornton's project "seems tarnished" by this method.[20] The printers and booksellers Samuel Richardson, Samuel Johnson, Robert Dodsley, Ralph Griffiths, and Edward Cave encouraged many women, but they may have been motivated as much by the burgeoning literary marketplace as by an intention to do justice to aesthetic judgments.[21] Donna Landry points out that more men than women subscribed to volumes of poetry by Collier and Leapor and that Garrick may have written the proposal for the subscription to Leapor's first book.[22] Yet Garrick sneakily prevented Frances Brooke from becoming the translator of Madame Riccoboni's works.

In judging the seriousness of the barrier that public opinion was, we can look at the reasons women gave for publishing their poetry (novels and plays had to be acknowledged from the outset as commercial endeavors). Katherine Philips had claimed that she was reacting to an inaccurate edition of stolen poems, and most of the women who published before 1730 said that they wrote for their private amusement, allowed a few individual poems to be published in impeccably respectable places (with a few notable exceptions, such as Rowe), and then participated in the publication of a collection of poems. By the 1730s male writers were insisting, as Daniel Defoe had in the 1720s, that they wrote to do good, as "a Testimony of my good Will to my Fellow Creatures."[23] This stance was comfortable for women. As Mary Barber wrote, "From giving Wealth, my hands are

ty'd / . . . / Yet, have I, sometimes, the Delight / To help a Wretch, by what I write."[24] Ann Murry prefaced her *Poems on Various Subjects* by saying that "the greater part . . . were designed . . . to describe the advantages resulting from rectitude of manners" and to instill religious precepts. These motives are predictable, for her popular *Mentoria* books were composed of discussions of topics with "student" questions and her answers, and she had used poetry to make the lessons memorable. By 1777 Mary Savage was openly poking fun at publishing because "my Sentiments may be of 'use to the World' . . . (all which reasons by the way are reducible to my own Vanity)."[25] Women novelists had long been using economic need to justify their publications, and it became common for needy poets, especially in the provinces, to receive what was often respectable charity from collections of their verse published by subscription.

At long last many women came to feel that it was acceptable for women to write and that excuses were unnecessary. Clara Reeve's is a landmark statement on the subject:

> I formerly believed, that I ought not to let myself be known for a scribbler, that my sex was an insuperable objection, that mankind in general were prejudiced against its pretensions to literary merit; but I am now convinced of the mistake, by daily examples to the contrary. I see many female writers favourably received, admitted into the rank of authors, and amply rewarded by the public; I have been encouraged by their success, to offer myself as a candidate for the same advantages. I hope thus much [*sic*] may serve as a general apology for this undertaking.[26]

This 1769 statement asserts that the reception and rewards that women have and are receiving are motives enough for writing and publication. One of the most dedicated and professional writers of the entire century, Reeve is better known today for her novels, especially *The Old English Baron*, and respected for her critical book, *The Progress of Romance* (1785). In Popeian fashion she described herself,

> What tho' while yet an infant young,
> The numbers trembled on my tongue;
> As youth advanc'd, I dar'd aspire,
> And trembling struck the heavenly lyre.[27]

She could refer to a line of successful, respectable women poets that included Finch, Mary Chudleigh, Hester Chapone, Elizabeth Carter, and Mary Jones. Thus, she is asserting an established, authorized poetic identity, significantly, one traced through Pope, as well as through women writers. Mary Scott does the

same in 1774 in *The Female Advocate* when she epitomizes Monck, Chudleigh, Grierson, Barber, Chandler, Jones, Masters, Tollet, Lennox, Darwall, Talbott, and Aikin (Barbauld). She begins the eighteenth-century section, "Eternal wisdom, with benignant zeal, / Closely unites our duty and our weal" and says that Monck and the others "Demand the Poet's tributary bays" (13).

At almost the same time, Mary Whateley [Darwall] remarked in her dedication that she would "look down with a just contempt on the invidious Reflections of . . . Prejudice."[28] *Prejudice* had become the word that women writers habitually used to strike back at those who condemned them for writing or who took for granted that women's work was inferior, and it had been a code for some time for the terms in which many women and sympathetic men were discussing women's treatment in the literary marketplace. Cockburn's phrase "partial custom," means the same thing and was the more common term in her generation; Sarah Egerton, for instance, begins *The Emulation*, "Say, tryant Custom, why must we obey / The impositions of thy haughty sway? / From the first days of life unto the grave, / Poor womankind's in every state a slave." A reviewer of Whateley's book began with the opposing term: "It never can be a dispute with the liberal, whether the fine arts are the proper province for the exercize of female genius? — Nothing but the jealousy of our sex, and the envy of their own, would urge the least pretence for excluding the Ladies from any of those elegant and happy amusements which the arts of Imitation, may afford them."[29]

Although Whateley was an unusually independent and resolute woman, the unblushing terms in which she remarks on prejudice suggests that by then it was not acceptable to condemn women for writing. About the same time, publications such as George Ballard's *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain* indicate established interest in women and what they wrote. They also mark the growth of British prosperity and the rising number of people, including women, with the time to write and the growing number of booksellers and periodical publishers who provided markets. Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine*, for example, provided eight pages with two columns of poetry in selected issues by 1733 and in all issues beginning in January 1735.

None of this is to say that being a woman is not a barrier to becoming a poet or that for a woman to be a successful poet is not, in Richard Terry's words, "a different cultural event."[30] The modern poet Louise Bernikow agrees with Gilbert and Gubar that women writers never forget they are women overcoming "cultural expectations." She says that a woman poet "gives her imagination and courage to that struggle, pours energy into it in ways that do not exist for men."[31]

But certainly talent, access to books and experience, and a great deal of luck are more important. As Thomas Mann said, "Genius is bred in a good night's sleep," and Abraham Cowley wrote in the preface to his *Works* that poetry "must like the *Halcyon*, have *fair weather* to breed in." Swift acknowledged these truths when he commented in the prefatory letter to Barber's *Poems on Several Occasions*, "She seemeth to have a true poetical Genius, better cultivated than could well be expected, either from her sex, or the Scene she hath acted in, as the Wife of a Citizen."[32] One of the most prolific writers of the century, Hannah More, observed acidly of women writers' reception,

> In the judgment passed on her performances, she will have to encounter the mortifying circumstance of having her sex always taken into account, and her highest exertions will probably be received with the qualified approbation, *that it is really extraordinary for a woman.* Men of learning . . . are apt to consider even the happier performances of the other sex as the spontaneous productions of a fruitful but shallow soil, and to give them the same sort of praise which we bestow on certain sallads.[33]

The awareness of sex and gender and the traces of the poured energy are everywhere in the work of the women discussed in this book. Yet something else Bernikow says is equally apparent: "Women are schooled from childhood in the act of resistance, and the poetry we have written reflects that schooling."[34] That resistance takes many forms, from the angry protest poems in chapter 2 to the deliberate decision to write in the most canonical, "male" forms to the shaping of a career that becomes increasingly one of critique and independent outspokenness, as Charlotte Smith's did. For some women, writing as women and from that perspective was empowering. And for most of the women discussed in this book, writing poetry was a major part of their identity, gave them agency, and broke out in the joy found in Mary Savage's list in *Of the Use—Abuse of Poetry* of all the reasons that poetry writing would never cease. What must be obvious from this book is that barriers did not stop a larger number of talented women than we have recognized. The women poets should be recognized, not as an oppressed, struggling entity, but as an extremely diverse group facing markedly different levels of encouragement and reacting to these familiar barriers to writing in highly individual ways and differently at different times in their lives.

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Rather than endlessly recite women's disadvantages, we need to turn our attention to the barriers to assessing women's poetry. We need to follow the lead of

late-twentieth-century critics of the eighteenth-century novel, who have not only modified the canon but influenced the ways aesthetic judgments are made. No one within eighteenth-century studies is yet calling for new terms of debate and assessment for poetry, as Toni Bowers has so memorably done in regard to novels. To adapt Bowers's words, "Rather than denigrate (or praise) [eighteenth-century women's poetry] wholesale, critics might better ask why we define 'good' [poetry] as we do, how our assumptions about literary value still work to valorize some voices and exclude others, and how our capacities for pleasure and appreciation might be augmented by respectful engagement with works we have been trained to resist or dismiss."[35] Before we can follow these critics' theoretical examples—which have addressed Bowers's list and continue to do so—we need to do what these critics, their foremothers, and literary historians did: survey the landscape carefully, open-mindedly, and in detail. We need to recognize and compensate for the barriers, and we need to assess the value of the poems we are rediscovering in new and even radical ways. As this book's chapters on retirement poetry and the elegy show, we need to do no less than rewrite the history of entire decades and poetic genres in the period, and as the chapters on religious poetry, friendship poems, and the sonnet suggest, we need to widen the eighteenth-century poetic landscape and revise our conception of women's contribution to literary history. The perimeters and conventions that define forms shift and change when, for instance, women's hymns or same-sex elegies are taken into account, and new paradigms emerge.

The first barrier to this work is that much women's poetry, even the poetry of the best, is lost. Charles Hinnant points out that we may not even know all of Finch's poetry because of the places that she published, and Isobel Grundy says the same of Lady Mary.[36] We have almost none of Judith Madan's and Constance Grierson's poetry, and both were unusually good poets. Almost no one had the audacity that Margaret Cavendish did in writing a preface titled "To the Two Most Famous Universities of England" and then sending the volume *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* to the universities and people associated with them.[37] Susanna Blamire's poetry survives partly because a schoolteacher wrote some of them in her commonplace book, and Charlotte Smith remarks in the preface to the third edition of her *Elegiac Sonnets* that she has added some poems "recovered from my acquaintance, to whom I had given them without thinking well enough of them at the time to preserve any copies myself."[38] Women did not write literary executors into their wills, although a few, including Katherine Philips, Aphra Behn, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, and Anna Seward, left manuscripts and

records in the hands of trusted male friends and thereby assured important, posthumous publications. Sir Walter Scott's is still the standard edition of Seward's poetry. Mary Leapor helped her friend Bridget Freemantle prepare what would be a posthumous collection of her poetry. While almost anyone would save a scribbled verse within a letter from Alexander Pope, women's letters and poems were usually received as ephemeral communications.

How typical—in content, form, or quality—the poems by women that we do know are deserves serious analysis. Such work on poetry remains to be done in much more detail than I have been able to do. Indeed, it may be impossible because of the vagaries in what survives and what we can read. What survives is always to some extent accidental and fortuitous. This book demonstrates that the number of personal poems addressed to intimate friends, male and female, is not as representative of what women wrote as we have thought. The graceful occasional verse that cultured women were expected to be able to write, often centered on an amusing or sentimental observation, continues to seem "feminine," and such poems are often selected for reprinting. Those personal poems that are on public, topical, literary, or political events are seldom chosen. It is in them, however, that the best extempore sound is achieved, as it is in Mary Barber's *Epigram on the "Battle of the Books,"* written for her circle of Irish friends: "Swift for the *Antients* has argu'd so well, / 'Tis apparent from thence, that the *Moderns* excel." The popular title *Poems on Several Occasions* focuses the reader's attention on the immediate rather than on, for instance, the kind of formal virtuosity that Pope designed his 1717 *Collection* to represent.

Second, where and how women poets published is another barrier to assessment of their individual and collective work. They published in periodicals, the popular miscellanies of the day, and subscription editions. In all of these venues their poems were less accessible and more subject to influences likely to skew content than in collected, single-author editions. We are only beginning to assess how strong opinions about the appropriate forms for women were and to reexamine how (and whether) they influenced not only what was published and anthologized but also what women wrote and released. Gilbert and Gubar summarize adeptly:

> Verse genres have been even more thoroughly male than fictional ones. The sonnet, beginning with Petrarch's celebrations of "his" Laura. . . . The "Great Ode" encourages the poet to define himself as a priestlike bard. The satiric epistle is usually written when a writer's manly rage transforms "his" pen into a figurative sword. And

> the pastoral elegy—beginning with Moscus's "Lament for Bion"—traditionally expresses the poet's grief over the death of a brother-poet, through whose untimely loss he faces and resolves the cosmic questions of death and rebirth.[39]

The fact that so many of the poets discussed in my book are in various ways obsessed with form suggests that this gendering of forms was deep in their consciousnesses but also that it did not generate taboos and was as often enabling as impeding.

Although earlier periodicals had published poetry, the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the host of magazines that sprung up in the 1730s and thereafter made publication for every would-be and serious poet easy and, more important, commonplace. Germaine Greer has pointed out that the "more outer-directed a poet, the more likely she is to produce work that satisfies the current taste and the current taste only."[40] Those poets for whom periodicals were the primary venue often exhibit this behavior. By 1743 Pope was listing the magazines as one of the "disgraceful" dangers to art (*Dunciad* 1.42). Cave cultivated provincial subscribers and contributors and published volumes of poetry by some of them, including Jane Brereton. Although she often rises far above the masses, her poetry, like Mary Robinson's, certainly provides a guide to fads in topic, treatment, and form. Beside the most derivative, conventional sentiments appeared some of the best work by the now-canonical poets, and beside ambitious, formal poetry were little reflections on the most ephemeral political skirmishes and mundane domestic and personal events and feelings.

Third, there are no neutral collections, miscellanies, or anthologies,[41] and although their part in the forgetting or erasure of women poets is open to various interpretations, they surely played—and play—some part. Whether we consider eighteenth- or late-twentieth-century books, the same contingencies are found. Who knew whom? Who were the authoritative groups of canonizers? What was fashionable? who was fashionable? What was the agenda (moral? ideological? popular amusement?) of the editor or bookseller? What poems did the editor own or have access to? Among the editors or the editors' friends were there advocates or popularizers of individual, lesser-known poets?

A number of scholars have traced the history of collections with increasingly detailed evidence.[42] Richard Terry, whose account is one of the most balanced, points out that a women's canon can be detected in the early, frequent reprinting of poems by Behn, Finch, Philips, Rowe, and Anne Wharton but that the situation after midcentury was quite different.[43] Key dates in this history are 1747–55,

when Dodsley's *Collections*, Colman-Thornton's *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, Ballard's *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain who have been Celebrated for their Writings*, and other signs of interest in women poets were dramatic; the 1770s after *Donaldson v. Becket* (1774); and 1793–1810, when the "national" collections often associated with the turn of the century were published. The treatment of women and their poems varied considerably for reasons that are both documented (Dodsley's reliance on what he owned) and highly speculative (the long-lived Seward, Williams, Baillie, Opie, and Barbauld did not die soon enough to be included in the influential collections that excluded living poets that came out at the turn of the century). Recent studies of the more than five thousand collections consistently document the arbitrariness of the contents, especially where women poets were concerned, and some critics, like Elizabeth Eger, conclude harshly that "women who were present in earlier anthologies, and widely read in the periodicals of the time, were excluded from their nation's major monument to cultural posterity."[44]

In any account, central to the history of collections are Dodsley's and a group of mostly Scottish editions that included Hugh Blair's 44-volume *British Poets* (1773–76) and the 109-volume *Bell's Edition: The Poets of Great Britain complete from Chaucer to Churchill* (1777–83). Most scholars date the formation of the canon to 1770–1880, and the editing of collections by increasingly respected "literary" men, such as Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry* and Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*, both completed in 1781, accelerated the idea that a canon was desirable and identifiable. The great turn-of-the-century "national" collections, Robert Anderson's *Works of the British Poets* (14 vols., 1795–1807) and Alexander Chalmers's *Works of the English Poets* (21 vols., 1810), seemed authoritative and reliably comprehensive. In a wonderfully apt phrase, Roger Lonsdale has remarked on the "hypnotic" effect of the way "the eighteenth century succeeded in anthologizing itself,"[45] and the existence of prestigious male-only collections leads to the idea that there were no women, or that there were no women good enough available for inclusion. The later, millennium anthologizers quickly tended to separate men and women. As Richard Terry says, Joseph Ritson "quarantined" women in *The English Anthology* (1793–94)—note the title.[46] Even Rebecca Manners, one of the impressively large group of fine women poets at the end of the century, excludes all women except Sappho in her *Review of Poetry* (1799).[47]

But the extent to which collections familiarized British readers with poems and shaped their taste needs serious study. Poetry was a popular *and* respected

genre in the time, and the number of editions of individual poets' works and of poems by earlier male poets, as well as continued periodical publication with routine mentions of "great" or at least standard-setting poems, argues against the overwhelming significance some scholars attribute to the collections. All of these venues worked with the collections to set opinions about women's work. Anthologies are exactly what Elizabeth Eger calls them, "the creators and barometers of public reading taste."[48]

That Robert Dodsley, the footman who became the leading publisher of English poetry in the century, was above all a shrewd reader of the national temper and the buying public is clear. His *Collections* were sources of fashionable conversation even as they influenced the formation of the canon by insisting that they developed taste. Among the signs of his developing understanding of the potential of his *Collection of Poems in Three Volumes* (January 1748) is that he moved Lady Mary's poems from volume 3 to volume 1 in the second edition (December 1748).[49] He recognized that they and John Hoadly's poems on Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*, one of the reworkings of this familiar story that found its way into numerous novels, such as *Tom Jones* and *Humphrey Clinker*, were news. The 1758 edition of Dodsley's *Collection of Poems in Six Volumes* begins with more than fifty pages of poetry by Akenside and Shenstone, thereby setting a tone of simplicity, rural elegance, and melancholy. Critics have pointed out that he was also picking up the taste for the picturesque and "ornate prettiness."[50] As John Butt says, his *Collections* are a good guide to the "state of English poetry at the death of Pope."[51] At the time that Shakespeare was being made into a national monument, Dodsley in a more modest way was doing the same for Pope. George Justice points out that volume 3 of Dodsley's 1758 *Collection* glorifies Pope as author through poems of tribute, making him a cultural icon by orienting "the contents towards [Pope's] authorship, rather than [his] poetry."[52] Volume 3 ends with an iconic engraving of Pope and Dodsley's poem *The Cave of Pope*. Dodsley printed women's poems and included many poems sure to interest them, yet he seriously slighted them. Only about 7 percent of the contents of the six-volume set were by women, and there were no poems by Finch, Chudleigh, Rowe, Barber, or Leapor. Like the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, he appealed to people striving for upward mobility, gentility, and au courant status. He impressed on his readers that his was a "judicious collection" representing "acknowledged taste."[53] There were poems on events and royalty, as well as plenty of name dropping. Richard West, for instance, was identified as "Son to the Chancellor of Ireland, and Grandson of Bishop Burnet."

Although Dodsley's *Collections* should be more carefully analyzed as part of hegemonic movements to construct an English identity and to establish British superiority in every domain, this structure of feeling is usually identified with the later anthologies and collections.[54] Addison's call for superiority in "*arts* and arms" (emphasis mine) predicted the dedication to encouraging and publicizing a national literature, and James Thomson's *Rule, Britannia* captured and consolidated a vision of economic, political, cultural, and even aesthetic values that was on the edge of becoming the dominant structure of feeling. Suvir Kaul traces these sentiments in poetry and notes that poets were "excited by the possibility that great poetry might follow upon, perhaps even contribute to . . . great national power."[55] As Gerald Newman has written, the signs of rising nationalism were everywhere, including in the passion for "the collection, study and promotion of everything pertaining to the national cultural heritage,"[56] and that would certainly include poetry.

The earliest "national" collections celebrated the achievements of the poets and poems that, in a paraphrase of Dodsley's "Advertisement" to his 1770 *Collection*, "merited long remembrance." They were the rails that carried not only the belief in what the nation should be ethically, aesthetically, politically, and globally but also in what poets were and might be. For instance, Dodsley concluded his "definitive" 1758 *Collection* "with the icon that was to obsess the Romantic revolutionaries: an engraving of Gray's bard, the embodiment of poetic resistance to political tyranny."[57] Although Seward, Opie, Williams, and other women blatantly identified their work with the tradition of dauntless courage, morality, and resistance, the bearded bard and Britannia's muse became increasingly gendered emblems.

Collections of poems by women were published and sold well by midcentury. Although it might be thought that they would bring the best women poets to public attention, the actual effect seems to have been to begin to create a ghetto for them. Although they were rather generously included in collections such as Robert Shiels's *Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland* (1753), as Richard Terry says, "Women writers tend to gain ground as constituting their own canon, rather than as making inroads into the established male one."[58] Their work is seen as "biodegradable," writes Germaine Greer.[59] Certainly it came to be more vulnerable to judgments about the nature and appropriate behavior of women. Some critics use revisions in George Colman and Bonnell Thornton's *Poems by Eminent Ladies* (London, 1755, 1773, [1780]; Dublin, 1757) as evidence, but I would argue that editorial decisions would not become unmistakably gendering

enterprises until the Romantic period. Ezell points out that the first edition shows "a wide range of literary styles, genres, and topics" and that a narrowing and gendering of focus is clearly apparent by the fourth.[60] Behn's poetry, for instance, was reduced from forty-nine poems, including *A Voyage to the Isle of Love*, to four poems on six pages. The often acerbic Barber is reduced to six poems in the 1780 edition, and some of her best and most representative poems are cut, including her fables, the political poems on the Widow Gordon, and *To Mrs. Strangeways Horner.* Chudleigh's *Ladies Defence* and Killigrew's *Discontent* are removed to make room for new poets. Perhaps reflecting a general trend away from religious poetry, a number of poems, such as Leapor's *Crucifixion and Resurrection. An Ode*, Masters's psalms, and all but two of Rowe's poems, disappear.

It seems to me that as good an argument can be made that the later edition shows changing tastes as that for gender-driven narrowing. Quite topical poems disappear, and such poems as Mrs. Hampton Pye's *Elgiva to Edwy*, Chapone's *Ode to Solitude*, Roberts's *Effusions of Melancholy*, and Darwall's *Pleasures of Contemplation*[61] are very much of their time and not especially "feminine." Savage and Barbauld, among others, certainly deserve to be included, and the selections of their poems include satires and other "masculine" forms. Neither Jones's nor Finch's poems are decreased in number. Yet collections of poetry by men were routinely expanded into additional volumes, while *Eminent Ladies* was edited. It must be concluded that women suffered more than men from the narrowing of acceptable topics and forms for "polite" poetry, from the growing number of same-sex collections, and from the project of nationhood. The anthologies thus became another barrier to the preservation of representative samples of women's work, narrowing our idea of what women wrote and how many were writing.

Fourth, women's poetry has often been turned against their sex, and that too works against fair analysis. The tiresomely repetitious selection of poems such as Mary Chudleigh's *Wife and Servant are the same* reinforces negative stereotypes of women writers as angry amazons, opponents of traditional heterosexual marriage, and freaks. Almost as popular is reprinting (and doctoring) poems in which women criticize other women, thereby perpetuating "extreme and debilitating images of women" or writing "about girls the way the blokes do."[62] Typical is the frequent choice to reprint at least part of Mary Barber's *To a Lady, who commanded me to send her an Account in Verse, how I succeeded in my Subscription*, which is in the form of Pope's *On the Characters of Women.* A series of dramatized women speak, saying such things as "Verses are only writ by men: / I know a woman cannot write." In several modern collections, the verses portraying satirized male speak-

ers and, most shockingly, the ending of the poem are cut. This truncation omits the tribute to "You, Madam . . . / . . . / Who with superior sense are bless'd" but also disguises the lovely shape of this classically Horatian poem, one that every reader of Pope's *Epistle to Arbuthnot* and his Moral Essays would appreciate. Structure, movement, and balance are always considered in evaluating the artistry of poetry, and such cutting not only leads to a devaluing of the poetry but turns Barber into an unpleasant critic of her own sex.

One of the greatest barriers to the study and reassessment of eighteenth-century women's poetry is surely the freedom with which the poems have been excerpted.[63] Although more tolerance should undoubtedly be granted Wordsworth, who was collecting poems for a friend, Lady Lowther, and calls his collection *Poems and Extracts*, his editing is in fact all too typical. For example, he feels free not only to omit verses and the conclusion to Finch's *The Petition for an Absolute Retreat*, one of her greatest poems, but also to omit six lines in the middle of one of the verses.[64] Such excisions usually change the meaning, not just the tone, drastically. Wordsworth's cuts to *Absolute Retreat* omit the wittiest lines, the observations on the pretensions of the times; and Roger Lonsdale's to Anne Finch's *The Spleen* falsify its tone and rob it of its breadth and masterful variety of tones. Omitting opening and closing lines of poems has an especially drastic effect on the meaning and tone, as Lonsdale's to *The Spleen* do. One of the most original essays on Finch's *Description of One of the Pieces of Tapestry at Long-leate* and the possibilities of a feminine poetics is in the final chapter of Ruth Salvaggio's *Enlightened Absence*, but because she had access only to a misleading, cut version of the poem, there are serious errors.[65] Margaret Doody speculates that Virginia Woolf knew only the Wordsworth version of Finch's *Nocturnal Reverie*.[66] Similar abridgments of Mary Jones's *Epistle to Lady Bowyer* erase the Horatian-Popeian debates about happiness and the price of fame. In the uncut version there are glimpses of women's distinct perspective throughout; there are references to mending candles and an appreciation of her freedom: "No houshold lord, for better or for worse."[67] In almost every collection I examined, these are silent cuts.

Yet another example of the kind of perverse selection and abridgment that appears to be common can be found in the influential *Norton Anthology of English Literature*.[68] Almost all of its selections are from the category of woman turned against the sex. The theme is pointedly marriage, and "The Cons of Marriage" (as the editors style it) from *Roxana* is paired with an excerpt from Astell's *Some Reflections upon Marriage*, and Montagu's *The Lover* is paired with her *Epistle from*

Mrs. Yonge to her Husband in the main part of the contents. There is a single poem by Finch, *A Nocturnal Reverie* (surely that it is short encouraged its selection), and nothing by Rowe, Smith, or any other woman poet. Perhaps in an effort to show that women can give as well as they get (or that women who write are angry), a section entitled "Debating Women: Arguments in Verse" includes such poems as Anne Ingram's *Epistle to Mr. Pope.*

In fact, almost any anthology available today could be used as an example. Margaret Ezell complains of the "the search for sameness" that obscures the work of certain kinds of women and certain kinds of women's writing.[69] Rather than selecting poems that are representative of women poets' best work (whatever that might mean to the time and the anthologizer) or a representative selection of the kinds of poetry they wrote (either content or kinds), selections of poems that can be placed in relation to the canonical male poems are ubiquitous. So excellent an anthology as that by David Fairer and Christine Gerrard includes Mary Jones's *Epistle to Lady Bowyer* and Lady Mary's *Verses Address'd to the Imitator of Horace* (written with Hervey), both in dialogue with Pope, and places Mary Collier's *Woman's Labour* beside Stephen Duck's *Thresher's Labour. The Longman Anthology of British Literature* crams Chudleigh, Finch, and Leapor under the Behn entry as "Coterie Writing" (nine poems occupying ten pages), has a poem by Finch in the South Sea Bubble section, and three poems by Lady Mary, including the inevitable *Lover: A Ballad* and an attack on Swift, *The Reasons That Induced Dr. S. to write . . . "The Lady's Dressing Room."*[70] *Coterie* is an unfortunate, ghettoizing, and even inaccurate term, especially when Chudleigh's *Wife and Servant are the same* and Leapor's *Essay on Woman* are included. To be fair, the editor commendably includes some poems on writing in this section, such as Finch's poem *The Introduction.* Although there are sections in the anthology on landscape and "Mind and God," no women are represented in them.

The overall impression is of angry, often satirical women who do not rise above women's "situation" or write beautiful as well as biting poetry. Because women poets and how many there were are largely unknown, they and their work are often seen as novelties—Samuel Johnson's analogy of dogs walking on their hind legs comes to mind. Roger Lonsdale selects *Sonnet Written in the Church Yard at Middleton in Sussex* ("Tears from their grassy tombs the village dead . . .") as the single poem in *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse* representing Charlotte Smith. Within the body of women's work, the shrewish poems in the Norton anthology *are* novelties, and Finch and her beautiful poem appear as anomalous because no other such pieces by women are included.

Fifth, the scholarship on eighteenth-century women poets is exceptionally uneven. "One never dares make too confident an assertion about poets, poems or poetry; a new manuscript may turn up tomorrow which radically alters the picture," Mary Hobbs writes.[71] Germaine Greer laughs at "feminist scholars who . . . assume that there are texts attributed to women that actually represent what women wrote and the way they wrote it."[72] Almost every year seems to bring a new, horrible discovery, such as the amount of revising and cutting eighteenth-century periodical publishers did.[73] Not only are women victims of accidental survival, excerpting, and abridging but, as Philips, Rowe, and Brereton were, they are at the mercy of the editors who ordered and arranged their texts. Too few of these women's works are in print, and at least one modern series that was making them available has ended.[74] There is not even a readily accessible edition of Finch's poems. Moreover, each poet's output is as individual as she herself was.

As with any literary group, the education, talent, and opportunities of women poets are extremely variable and stretch over a long continuum. So, too, their subject matter and their chosen verse forms. Unlike male poets, the women poets are habitually treated as a group, and such treatment necessarily privileges what they have in common rather than highlighting the need for discriminating analyses of each one's work and place in literary history. Only a few women poets, notably Aphra Behn, Anne Finch, and Charlotte Smith, have received any real sustained study by a number of critics or been included in anthologies often enough to be seen as poets whom students and scholars of literature should recognize. For a while Mary Wortley Montagu's Town Eclogues were often reprinted, and thanks to Isobel Grundy we are finally beginning to understand Montagu's considerable virtuosity, yet representative selections from her poetry appear in no student anthologies. Few anthologies and, until this one, no whole-century critical books devoted to women poets existed. In fact, as late as 2000 an anthology, *The Enlightenment and English Literature: Prose and Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*, by John L. Mahoney (Waveland Press), could be published without a single poem by a woman, even in the "Minor Poetry" section.

It was not until the 1990s that definitive biographies of Behn, Finch, Montagu, Smith, and Baillie were written, and the letters of Joanna Baillie, with their rich commentary on her poetry and the writing climate for women in her time, were not collected and published until 1999. The first literary life of Jane Barker with substantial attention to her poetry was published in 2000, and the letters of Charlotte Smith in 2003.[75] The biography of Mary Whateley Darwall and edi-

tions of the poetry of Mary Chudleigh and Mary Robinson are the results of the private passions, tenacity, and press savvy of, respectively, Ann Messenger, Margaret Ezell, and Judith Pascoe.

More uneven has been our use of women's poems in writing the history of women. As long as we know so much more about the novelists and dramatists and their work than we do about the poets, our understanding of women's achievements will be distorted and perhaps fatally flawed. Their poems give us new insights into women's lives and their relationship to writing, genres, and the literary and political establishments. I have tried to begin to show that they were continually examining the sex-gender system and its implications for them and their nation, as Hands and Seward did, and that they found many ways to use poetry to question and even destabilize the status quo. The records they left of what they believed their writing meant, why they had a right to do what they did, who they spoke as, and to whom they spoke offer eloquent women's history awaiting full explication.

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Twenty-first-century critics and readers continue to hold fixed opinions that are as counterproductive as Trotter's "partial custom." For example, eighteenth-century women are not seen as serious professional poets dedicated to a life of mastering their craft. Thus, one little-recognized barrier for a just assessment is the question of what patterns and shapes the careers of women poets might legitimately take.[76] We have largely been blind to the models women poets created, what they wanted, what they fashioned to enable a writing life, and even what they achieved. Neither agency nor ambition has been sufficiently studied. It is intriguing to contemplate how seriously we have taken male poets' own statements and cultural signals that they are Poets; believing them, we have looked for Poetry in their works and, perhaps, learned from them what to forgive and what to valorize.

Because in almost all cases I read the entire known poetic output of each woman, I became aware of how attuned they were to the poetry being written and published around them and of how dedicated they were to mastering their craft. Over and over I found, as others have, women learning to speak through respected poetic forms even as they adapted them to their own voices, purposes, experiences, and aspirations, and I found women continuing and developing distinctive themes and poetic kinds. I found a dense network of working poets—male and female—friends, and publishers who were intensely aware of one other. In every poetic fad and movement, I found women working with excellence and

diligence. They dashed off invitation poems, and they contributed significantly to what we see in retrospect as the project of transforming classical and Continental Renaissance forms into English or even British poetic kinds. Repeatedly, as this book shows, I found women who believed in their agency as human beings and as poets who used poetry to express and explore autonomous selves and who exemplified personal and poetic maturity in a variety of ways, including Marlon Ross's test of "taking poetry itself as the subject for poetry."[77]

How, then, might we look for "the shape of a poetic career" in the lives of less public poets than Smith? get beyond the smokescreens? Inseparable from career is permission—permission to write, to make writing one of the most important things in life. We might begin there. Whether from an inherited sense of entitlement, a hard-won sense of self-worth and calling, or an unexpected success followed by sustained encouragement, permission turns into the Life of a Poet, a career as a poet. Many, often paraphrasing Pope, claimed that poetry was in their genes and an unquenchable desire, a lifelong passion. There is Montagu's "haunted . . . by the Daemon Poesie" and Smith's "in the stillness of the night, verses occur to me."

Two questions that beg to be answered as we search for the shape of a woman's career are, first, which poems the women themselves might select as their "signature" poems, the poems that bear their distinctive style and voice and, second, which would be the signature poems selected were editors to use the same principles that consistently give us *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, the same lines from *Winter* in *The Seasons*, and *Ode on the Poetical Character*. In almost every case they probably would not be the poems that their collection-reading contemporaries or we know best.

It might be argued that Pope was the first English writer to live the life of a professional poet in the light of day. His seriousness, his devotion to revision and polish, his lifelong dedication to poetry, and his eloquent statements about the significance and possible impact of Poetry contrast markedly with the ambitions and working habits of all but a very few writers before Seward and the great Romantics. Finch habitually stated the importance of her poetry to her happiness, and she wrote many poems that describe the immediate joy she was experiencing while writing, but she frequently denied professionalism and high ambition. In situation and practice she was perhaps too much like the upper-class women of the preceding generations, whose writing was a cultured, leisure activity and who saw their publication as primarily a circulation of manuscripts, many dotted with insider references. Therefore, women needed Behn, Montagu,

Rowe, and especially the next generation of women, such as Carter and Mary Jones, who was willing to publish in *An Epistle to Lady Bowyer:* "Well, but the joy to see my works in print! / Myself too pictur'd in a mezzo-tint!" The writing lives of Smith, Seward, and Robinson were lived in the full light of day, yet none conforms to the shape we have constructed as that of the serious, canonized poet.

As Larry Lipking has reminded us, one of the important things that Samuel Johnson did in his *Lives of the Poets* was hold "poets to account, like other men, for the use of their talents."[78] An intriguing question is the extent to which we should also hold women poets accountable, and part of that accountability is fashioning a career path. Today women's disclaimers ("I just write for amusement") are a little tiresome, but that is because statements like Mary Scott's in her dedication to *The Female Advocate: A Poem* are seldom quoted: "All I contend for is, that it is a duty absolutely incumbent on every woman whom nature hath blest with talents, of what kind soever they may be, to improve them."[79] Some of the women are clearly pushing themselves to test the extent of their talent. Certainly most of them are seeking to define their relationship to poetry, the place it has and "should" have in their lives (*should* is writ large for women), and, just as Pope and most other eighteenth-century male poets did, the extent to which it is part of their destiny and even deepest identity. A number of poems, such as the following by Carter, were written about the talent and desire to write poetry:

> Those Gifts for nobler Purposes assign'd,
> To raise the Thoughts, and moralize the Mind;
> The chaste Delights of Virtue to inspire,
> And warm the Bosom with seraphic Fire;
> Sublime the Passions, lend Devotion Wings,
> And celebrate the first great Cause of Things.[80]

Chapone actually expresses a sense of accountability when she writes that she published to "appease" "in some measure, that uneasy sense of helplessness and insignificancy in society, which has often depressed and afflicted me." Representing an emerging structure of feeling, she wrote this in 1777, when the largest number of women to consider themselves professional poets was on the horizon.[81] It seems to me that increasingly women poets used their gifts with a deliberate assuming of the social and ethical consciousness that Johnson had foregrounded and used to judge men in his *Lives of the Poets.*

Men in the eighteenth century were the poets who went mad, produced agonizingly small numbers of poems over a long life, or committed suicide. Yet they shared "a common creed: a faith in greatness," and the realization that "the larger

the ambition, the more a poet must learn to live with a consciousness of failure."[82] Women might have to turn to fiction to earn a living, but they were not driven to despair by the distance between aspiration and achievement. Joanna Baillie's *Address to the Muses*, for instance, is an insolent promise to keep writing "Though greater inspirations never fall to me." This poem is especially delightfully defiant because it illustrates in imagery and versification the power poetry can have: "Ye are the spirits who preside / In earth and air and ocean wide; / In hissing flood and crackling fire; / In horror dread and tumult dire." Women at this moment in history were fortunate, and within poems admitting gendering forces many expressed their freedom.

Throughout the century women wanted to "sing like Sappho." Although only fragments of her poetry survived and what women knew about the Greek poet was slim, she was the epitome of "poetic fire," passion, and harmony to poets like Carter and Barbauld, who had some classical education, and of "bewitching Tenderness and Rapture" to those who accepted Addison's characterization.[83] To them all, as she was to Robinson, she was Poetry. Many poets explicitly measured themselves against this icon, as Mary Leapor did in her *Hymn to Morning:*

> Ah! *Sappho* sweeter sings, I cry,
> And the spiteful Rocks reply,
> (Responsive to the jarring Strings)
> Sweeter — *Sappho* sweeter sings.[84]

The honesty and the craftsmanship of these poems are marks of the accountable Poet, and *hold accountable* has always implied a judgment of aspirations.

The greatest barriers to serious study and a just assessment of women's poetry are the lingering attitudes of the most influential critical voices of our time. As Margaret Ezell stated succinctly: "We have also had our sight of the past restricted by preconceived notions of what we will see there, and even more important, what we should be looking for in the first place."[85] Perhaps Theodore Roethke has summarized most economically the lingering view of poetry by women: "Two of the charges most frequently levelled against poetry by women are lack of range — in subject matter, in emotional tone — and lack of a sense of humor. And one could, in individual instances among writers of real talent, add other aesthetic and moral shortcomings: . . . the embroidering of trivial themes; . . . that special province of the feminine talent in prose — hiding from the real agonies of the spirit; refusing to face up to what existence is."[86]

Although somewhat obscured by the range and power of the condemnation, Roethke's opinion is that even the women of "real talent" slide naturally into

these patterns. His opinions echo through the centuries. In one of the few collections of women's poetry before the twentieth century, *Specimens of British Poetesses*, Alexander Dyce wrote, "The tremendous thoughts which have impressed a successive stamp on the fluctuation of ages, and which have almost changed the character of nations, — these have not proceeded from woman."[87] This opinion is still surprisingly common, and so are the ways women are disqualified from serious consideration. In her important book *The Sign of Angellica* Janet Todd spends little time on poetry, but she characterizes women's verse: "They created a mass of elegiac and wistful verse lamenting the pains of affection and the inevitable waning of life."[88]

Although we no longer impose the categories of angel/slut, abandoned outlaw / modest, gently bred that extended from Behn/Philips and Rowe/Pilkington at least to Carter/Darwall/Smith versus Robinson/Wollstonecraft, we still too often attempt to force a woman's poetry into an existing category and deal with it summarily or grind down individual differences and even excellencies in order to "cover" a respectable number of poets. Why, for instance, are they to be crammed into a chapter by themselves in reference books being written today? Is it because they are expected to be interesting because they were women doing something daring and unusual? Are they supposed to be interesting because they confront, adapt, and revise a "masculinist" tradition? Are they still considered, even the best and at their best, "minor"? Although silence about women has become more common than insult, recent criticism, even by feminists, and the introductions of today's collections and anthologies continue to apply Roethke's adjectives to women's poetry.[89] Like Roethke, critics especially do not recognize women poets' "facing up to what existence is" and want them to stop "hiding from the real agonies of the spirit"; sometimes this is referred to as a lack of a compelling personal vision, and sometimes it means what Johnson meant by "accountable." The most popular from any time since 1780 seem to be those willing to "flay themselves," to parade "their capacity to be miserable."[90] Richard Terry reminds us that "the female author seen as most ripe for canonization is a kind of Clarissa figure, sternly moral-minded, but also isolated and beleaguered, whose literariness is counterpart with, or even an expression of, her essential victimhood."[91] Therefore the rise of Charlotte Smith in our own time?

Because the answer to these critics comes from actual experience with the broad range of women's poetry and systematic study of the *oeuvre* of a significant number of them, there is no changing their minds. A distressing number of the most recent critical books on eighteenth-century poetry either ignore women poets entirely or use an example or two as tokens. Annette Kolodny famously said

that Norman Mailer did not know how to read, and perhaps we do not yet know how to read much of the poetry by eighteenth-century women. Surely a poet does not have to scream or thunder to feel and convey powerful depths of feeling. And for every dreary, mopey woman who has been anthologized there is an amazingly creative, disrespectful, funny spirit like Mary Savage whom no one has bothered to immortalize. To quote Isobel Armstrong again:

> We have had two hundred years to discover a discourse of and strategies for reading male poets. They belong to a debate, a dialectic; we know how to think about politics, epistemology, power, and language, in productive ways that, whether it is Matthew Arnold or Paul De Man who writes, make these poets *mean* for us. A hermeneutics has evolved. Not so with female poets. We are discovering who they are, but there are few ways of talking about them. . . . We have not found productive historical ways of thinking about female poets either.[92]

How good are the women poets? What is their importance in literary history and to us today? What kinds of agency do their poems give women? Why are they important? For which literary movements—which we recall are not made by single great poets but are collective efforts that express the taste of a time, the longings and aspirations of a people, the creative genius of a poet, and the feelings of an individual writer—are they most important? How do we deal with the special challenges that women present to writing a new history of eighteenth-century poetry? Among the challenges is how to figure into literary history a woman whose works were discovered and published years after her death. If the woman was unknown in her own time, as Jane Brereton was, how should she be treated? How important is influence in awarding literary status? How much does contribution to the sense of a community of poets matter? Is how and when a poet wrote more important than when the work was published? In a different domain, we need to find ways to finance editions and reward time taken to search for examples of sustained achievement by women poets.

Almost everyone who knows about this book has asked me to identify "the best." It is easy to bridle at that question and think, In which poetic kind? By what measure? We do not even have the revised measures we need. But this question has to be asked for the simple reasons that we have to start somewhere as we teach in the field, and we have to set priorities as we continue the study of women poets. Some of the women poets are indeed better than others, as others' scholarship and this book demonstrate. Some women excelled in one or two types, while others wrote excellent poems in many, many forms. As pressing as this question is, the more important question may be, Who are the most important? As this

book shows, some are essential to an accurate and nuanced literary history. In this book I demonstrate that periodical publication was a much more important means to publication than we have thought, but in no way do I study it or other inquiries in print history systematically. Some women were in the vanguard of a poetic movement, and some are crucial to understanding the work that literature does in a culture. As James Redmond has said, some texts are "meant to be of immediate didactic value within the very specific context for which [they were] written,"[93] as Chudleigh's *Ladies Defence* and Seward's *Monody on Major André* were, and they are "important."

Crucially necessary is the meticulous, systematic refinement of almost every theme in contemporary criticism about poetry. For example, Kaul writes that "the history of English poetry in the long eighteenth century is best written as a history of poets' attempts to endow the nation with literary, cultural, and iconic capital adequate to its burgeoning status as a global power," and he attempts to take women into account.[94] Women's nationhood projects, however, are markedly different from, but at least as important as, the expansionist poetry of men. They were creating at least three things: "the landscape of nationalism," the achingly beautiful pastoral England, and a glorious nation of humanity, empathetic feeling, and superior morality. The "way of feeling—of feeling about native soil, of feeling about the past, of feeling about Englishness itself"[95] is incomplete without the poems by women. Their participation is often strikingly original, as it is in Thomas's *To Laura*.

If nothing else, criticism of the last ten years has taught us the inadequacies and dangers of creating a literary history out of Great Men. No one would represent the history of the eighteenth-century novel as the parade of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Smollett. The "minor" novelists have been discovered to be contributors in their own right and enablers of other writers. Burney and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Radcliffe have been with us for some time, and Behn and Haywood are now part of almost every course and discussion of the novel.[96] Novels including *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, *Millenium Hall*, and *A Simple Story* are now seen as respected artistic creations. The concentrated work of a generation of critics accomplished this reassessment, this remapping, and with this book, building on the work of many critics, I have tried to advance the same work, open some new issues and opportunities, and set some new directions. To a considerable extent, however, the reassessment of Restoration and eighteenth-century poetry remains to be done.

Biographies of the Poets

Writing these lives has been revealing and humbling. Not only is there disagreement about the birth, baptism, or death dates of some of these women but these and other basic facts about a few, including poets whom readers of this manuscript recognized as excellent, have eluded such supersleuths as Roger Lonsdale and Isobel Grundy. The publication of the new Oxford Dictionary of National Biography *(2004) came at a fortuitous time, and I used the dates given there unless I knew more scholarly evidence; however, even in that great work some women in my book are omitted. These sketches are intended to be a brief introduction to the women and should be supplemented by biographical and reception-history information in the text. In addition to the new* Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, *my sources for these sketches were Joyce Fullard's* British Women Poets, 1660–1800, *Victoria Blain, Isobel Grundy, and Patricia Clements's* Feminist Companion to Literature in English, *Roger Lonsdale's* Eighteenth-Century Women Poets, *Janet Todd's* Dictionary of British and American Women Writers, 1660–1800, *Paul Schlueter and June Schlueter's* Encyclopedia of British Women Writers, *prefaces to the women's poetry, the Orlando Project, and sources cited in discussions of their poetry. I am especially indebted to Roger Lonsdale's impressive research into the lives of these women.*

BAILLIE, JOANNA (1762–1851). Baillie moved from Glasgow, where she had been educated at a good boarding school, to London in 1784, after the death of her father, a professor of divinity at the University of Glasgow. In London her mother's famous brother, John Hunter, and his wife, the poet Anne, opened a distinguished intellectual society to her. A member of the Church of Scotland, she became part of Rochemont Barbauld's congregation in Hampstead. In 1790 she published *Poems* anonymously (identified by Roger Lonsdale in 1984 as different from *Fugitive Verses*) and became one of the best-known women writers of the day with her *Plays on the Passions*. John Philip Kemble and Sara Siddons starred in the Drury Lane production of *De Monfort* (1800). Baillie continued to write poetry and became a popular composer of songs and ballads, many of them Scottish in derivation.

BANNERMAN, ANNE (1765–1829). An Edinburgh woman, Bannerman came to Robert Anderson's attention when she published two sonnets and a translation of Rousseau's fifteenth ode in the *Edinburgh Magazine*. Her poems include translations from Italian as well. An acquaintance, Sydney Smith, a founder of the *Edinburgh Review*, described her as a "crooked poetess" because of a physical deformity. Bannerman published *Poems By Anne Bannerman* in 1800 and, with the help of Anderson and his contacts, *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802), which is considered her most important work today. Impoverishment

unrelieved by a subscription, revised edition of *Poems* (1807) led to her becoming a governess in Exeter and, as far as we know, ended her publishing career.

BARBAULD, ANNA LAETITIA AIKIN (1743–1825). The very well educated daughter of a Nonconformist minister in Warrington, Lancashire, Barbauld knew five languages, including Greek and Latin, and worked much of her life as a teacher. She published her first volume of poems in 1773 and, with her brother John, *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose* in the same year. In 1774 she married Rochemont Barbauld, who later became unstable and finally committed suicide. She was one of the most prolific writers and editors of her time and, in addition to poetry, wrote political and pedagogical tracts and was an important author of children's literature. Among her projects were editing Samuel Richardson's correspondence and the fifty-volume *British Novelists*.

BARBER, MARY (1690?–1757). Barber was the wife of an English woolen draper in Dublin and the mother of four children. Jonathan Swift described her as "wholly turn'd to Poetry" and Ireland's "chief poetess." She had published several poems before she met Swift, including a progress of poetry and strongly worded appeals on behalf of a military officer's widow. Poverty drove her to England, and she lived in Bath intermittently. Her *Poems on Several Occasions* (1734) was published by subscription. Rheumatism and gout crippled her hands and feet, and she appears to have given up writing. She died in Ireland, to which she had returned in the early 1740s.

BLAMIRE, SUSANNA (1747–1794). "The Muse of Cumberland" was reared and educated after her mother's death by her wealthy, widowed aunt in Thackwood. She was an accomplished musician, and some of her songs were printed as single sheets in the 1780s and included in collections such as *Calliope, or the Musical Miscellany* (1788). After her death, Patrick Maxwell and Henry Lonsdale devoted considerable effort to collecting her poems, and some, written on backs of recipes, came from relatives. The assembled poems were not published until 1842.

BRERETON, JANE HUGHES (1685–1740). The well-educated daughter of a Bryn-Griffith, Wales, family married Thomas Brereton in 1711. They separated in 1721 because of his violent, intemperate personality; he drowned the next year. She began publishing individual poems in 1716 and was "Melissa" in a series of poems published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Her collected poems were published posthumously by subscription, perhaps for her daughters' benefit.

CARTER, ELIZABETH (1717–1806). Educated in classical languages and modern subjects with her brothers by her father, the perpetual curate of Deal Chapel, Carter published her first volume of poetry, *Poems upon Particular Occasions*, in 1738, and except for an edition of the works of Talbot (1780), the last publication of her lifetime was the third edition of the augmented 1762 *Poems on Several Occasions* in 1789. After her mother's death, she kept her father's house for forty-seven years. Inheritances and annuities from friends allowed her to maintain her independence. She was a respected translator and essayist and a patron of other women's writing. Her translation of Epictetus's *Works* remained the standard English translation at least until 1966.

CHANDLER, MARY (1687–1745). A Nonconformist born in Wiltshire, Chandler opened a milliner's shop in Bath when she was about twenty years old. She cultivated her mind and knew both Elizabeth Singer Rowe and Mary Barber. She refers occasionally to her crooked spine, which she believed ruled out any hope of marriage. Her *My Own Epitaph* (1736), for instance, begins, "Here lies a true maid, deformed and old." Her *Description of Bath* (1733) was immediately popular; beginning with its third edition, she added other poems.

CHAPONE, HESTER MULSO (1727–1801). Chapone managed her father's home from an early age and became a member of the Bluestocking circle of Elizabeth Carter and Elizabeth Montagu. Her first publication was in Samuel Johnson's *Rambler* (1750). In 1760 she married John Chapone, who died within nine months. From that point on because of economic straits she drifted among friends' homes and that of her uncle, the bishop of Winchester. A plan for educating girls written for her niece, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind. Addressed to a Young Lady* (1773), made Chapone famous. After her death, her relatives collected her writings and published a two-volume and a four-volume *Works and Life* (both 1807), which included her correspondence with Samuel Richardson.

CHUDLEIGH, LADY MARY LEE (1656–1710). Chudleigh was born and married in Devon, and her first publication was the provocative *Ladies Defence* (1700). She was married at age seventeen and described her life as "solitary." She corresponded with learned women, including Mary Astell, and wrote throughout her life but published only in her last ten years. *Poems on Several Occasions* (1703) included poems such as *The Resolve* that were frequently anthologized throughout the century. She moved to Exeter for her health around 1703, suffered severely from rheumatism, and died an invalid.

COCKBURN, CATHERINE TROTTER (1674?–1749). Born of Scottish parents in London, Cockburn was the first woman since Aphra Behn to have a play produced at a royal theater (1695). By age fourteen she had already published a poem and *Olinda's Adventures*, a short novel. She married Patrick Cockburn in 1708, and they moved to Northumberland in 1726. In addition to plays and poems, she published philosophical essays and defenses of women's education and intellect as well. After her death, Thomas Birch published her *Works* in 1751.

COLLIER, MARY (1688?–1762?). Collier was born in Sussex, and her parents taught her to read. After her mother's death she became a laborer; upon her father's death in the 1720s she moved to Petersfield, Hampshire, where she described herself as a washerwoman, brewer, and general worker. She struggled to buy and borrow books to continue her education, and her *Woman's Labour: An Epistle to Mr. Stephen Duck* (1739) attracted considerable attention and today is one of the best-known poems by an eighteenth-century woman. *Poems on Several Occasions* was published by subscription in 1762. She continued working as a washerwoman until she was seventy.

DARWALL, MARY WHATELEY (1738–1825). Born in Beoley, Worcestershire, Darwall published her first poems in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (beginning in 1759). Her *Original Poems on Several Occasions by Miss Whateley* (1764) came out by well-organized subscription. In it,

she described her poems as "the Amusements of Youth, Leisure, and Solitude." She married the vicar of Walsall in 1766, reared twelve children, and after his death in 1789 lived a fairly insecure life in the Midlands and Wales. In 1774 she was recognized as one of "the British Nine," and her modern biography argues that she is such a good subject for study because she was an ordinary woman coping with "being both a woman and a poet." *Poems on Several Occasions* (1794) was also published by subscription.

DIXON, SARAH (1672–1765). Dixon was born in Kent, and her *Poems on Several Occasions* was published by subscription in Canterbury in 1740. She was encouraged to publish by her niece, Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's husband, the vicar of St. Stephen's, near Canterbury. She described herself as beginning to write poetry when she was "a Youth of much Leisure." According to a manuscript note, she was still writing in her seventies.

EGERTON, SARAH FYGE FIELD (1670–1723). Egerton was born in London, and her first publication was the notorious *Female Advocate* (1686). *Poems on Several Occasions* was published in 1703. In spite of her critiques of marriage, she married twice, once to an attorney named Field and later to the Reverend Thomas Egerton. The Reverend Egerton took a young attorney's clerk to Chancery to recover a gift she had made him from her substantial legacy from Field. Sarah and Thomas sued each other unsuccessfully for divorce. When he died in 1720, she enjoyed a brief, economically secure widowhood. In spite of her tumultuous and somewhat scandalous life, she wrote in most of the verse forms of her time and made some of the strongest contributions to the "fair-sex debate." She was a respected poet in her time and contributed to a volume of memorial poems when Dryden died and to *The Nine Muses* (1700).

FINCH, ANNE KINGSMILL, COUNTESS OF WINCHILSEA (1661–1720). A member of an aristocratic family that had served the monarch since the twelfth century, Finch was orphaned at age three and became a maid of honor to Mary of Modena. She married Heneage Finch in 1684 and followed him into retirement after the demise of King James II. She circulated poems in manuscript, published a few poems in miscellanies, including Charles Gildon's and Delarivière Manley's, and *Miscellany Poems on Several Occasions* in 1713. Her poems are now routinely included in textbooks, and she is widely accepted as the best woman poet of the century. At her death she left many unpublished poems, and the continued lack of a complete edition is remarkable.

GRIERSON, CONSTANTIA CRAWLEY (1706–1732). Although born to a poor, illiterate Irish country family, Grierson was given books by her father, and she became a poet and was responsible for editions of Terence and Tacitus. She was apprenticed to Laetitia Pilkington's father, the obstetrician John Van Lewen, and married George Grierson, a Scot who was the King's Printer in Dublin in 1725. Her poems are still being discovered (A. C. Elias announced finding a manuscript volume with ten of her poems in 1987), but most are probably lost.

HANDS, ELIZABETH HERBERT (1746–1815). For many years a servant, Hands married a blacksmith by 1784. She described herself as "never emerging beyond the lower stations in life" in the dedication to her collection of poems, *The Death of Amnon: A Poem. With An*

Appendix: Containing Pastorals, and other Poetical Pieces, which was published by subscription in Coventry in 1789. A few of her poems had appeared earlier in *Jopson's Coventry Mercury* and in a Birmingham newspaper. Donna Landry says of some of Hands's verse that "not since Swift have we seen comical satirical verse of the order" of hers. She was buried in Bourton-on-Dunsmore.

HARRISON, SUSANNAH (1752–1784). A domestic servant from age sixteen who taught herself to read and write, Harrison suffered a debilitating illness at age twenty from which she never recovered. Expecting to die, she gave her manuscripts to the Congregational minister John Condor, who edited the poems and published them for her as *Songs in the Night* (1780). There were at least twenty-one editions in Britain and America by 1823. The semi-invalid left 133 hymns, as well as other kinds of poems, some of which are still contained in hymnals.

JONES, MARY (1707–1778). Born in Oxford, Jones lived her entire life there, most of the time with her brother, the chanter of Christ Church Cathedral. She said that "her thoughts ever rambled into rhyme," and her *Lass of the Hill* was a popular broadside ballad in 1742. Her *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (1750) had about fourteen hundred subscribers; she claimed that its proceeds assisted "a relation, grown old and helpless." Admired for her intellect, poetry, and wit, she was invited to be one of Ralph Griffiths's reviewers, and at the invitation of the family, she wrote the prose inscription for Lord Aubrey Beauclerk's tomb in Westminster Abbey. At the time of her death she was postmistress of Oxford.

LEAPOR, MARY (1722–1746). The daughter of a gardener, Leapor was educated by her mother, who at least for a while encouraged her poetic talent. After her mother's death, Leapor's father moved from St. Lawrence, Northants, to Brackley, where he managed a nursery and Mary, who had been a cookmaid, kept house for him. She is said to have built up a library of seventeen books. A subscription collection of her poetry was under way at the time of her death, but both volumes were published posthumously.

MADAN, JUDITH COWPER (1702–1781). Madan's father was the judge and MP Spencer Cowper, her uncle was a Lord Chancellor, and her nephew was the poet William Cowper. She began publishing in 1720, but only five of her approximately fifty poems appeared before her death. *The Progress of Poetry* and *Verses Written in her Brother's Coke upon Littleton* are her best-known poems. She married Martin Madan, equerry to Frederick, Prince of Wales, in 1723, and they had nine children. She became a Methodist around 1756 and then wrote more religious than secular verse.

MANNERS, CATHERINE REBECCA GREY, LADY (1766?–1852). *On Leaving Lehena, In October 1788* begins, "Dear fields, where oft in infancy I strayed." From Cork, Ireland, she married William Manners, later Lord Huntingtower of Leicester. *Poems by Lady Manners* appeared in 1793 and required a second edition that year; *Review of Poetry, Ancient and Modern, A Poem, by Lady M***** was published in 1799. The title poem was a progress of poetry from Homer and Pindar through Akenside and Churchill.

MASTERS, MARY (1694?–1755). Daughter of parents who discouraged her writing poetry or even learning beyond "common Household Affairs," Masters grew up in Norwich.

She published *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733) by subscription. She wrote often about women's lack of educational and work opportunities, and *Familiar Letters and Poems on Several Occasions* (1755), also published by subscription, recommends Mary Astell's ideas. In the 1750s she sometimes stayed in London with Elizabeth Carter, Edward Cave, or Catharine Macaulay.

MONCK, MARY MOLESWORTH (1677?–1715). The daughter of Robert, Viscount Molesworth, of Dublin, Monck taught herself Latin, Italian, and Spanish. She married George Monck, who may have had periods of mental illness but was an MP in the Irish Parliament from 1703 to 1713. Her father published sixty-three of her poems in the year after her death as *Marinda. Poems and Translations upon Several Occasions.* She died in Bath after a lengthy illness, leaving a lovely deathbed poem to her husband. It begins, "Thou who dost all my worldly thoughts employ, / Thou pleasing source of all my earthly joy, / Thou tenderest husband and thou dearest friend."

MONTAGU, LADY MARY PIERREPONT WORTLEY (1689–1762). Montagu's mother died when she was four, and her father was Earl of Kingston. Her grandmother educated her until her death, and then Lady Mary "set herself to 'stealing' an education" in her father's library. She eloped with Edward Wortley in 1712 and accompanied him on his unsuccessful embassy to Constantinople. Her *Embassy Letters* (1763) may be her best-known work today. Some of her poetry was published in 1716 without her permission. She published periodical essays anonymously and wrote *The Nonsense of Commonsense*, a political journal, but the first collection of her poetry did not appear until 1768. In spite of a fine edition of her poems and a magisterial biography, the complexity and variety of her poetry are still unrecognized.

MURRY, ANN (c. 1755–after 1816). Murry's most popular work was *Mentoria: Or, The Young Ladies Instructor* (1776), and there were numerous editions and several sequels; many of the lessons ended with a poem. *Poems on Various Subjects* (1779) was published by subscription. The carefully educated daughter of a London wine merchant, Murry was preceptress in the royal nursery by 1791.

OPIE, AMELIA ALDERSON (1769–1853). Opie was the daughter of a politically radical Norwich physician and became a member of the Godwin-Inchbald circle. She married the Cornish painter John Opie in 1798, and they lived a fashionable life in London. After his death in 1807 she returned to Norwich and became a Quaker. She published novels, poems, tales, and moral texts. Probably her best-known work is *Adeline Mowbray*, a novel that dramatizes some of Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's theories.

PILKINGTON, LAETITIA VAN LEWEN (c. 1708–1750). Daughter of a Dutch physician emigrant to Dublin, Pilkington married Matthew Pilkington in 1725. Although he was unfaithful, he divorced her, and she lived a financially precarious life in London and spent time in the Marshalsea prison for debt. She is still notorious because of her *Memoirs*, which include many of her poems and anecdotes about Swift.

REEVE, CLARA (1729–1807). Educated by her father, an Ipswich clergyman, Reeve had wide-ranging literary interests and made a major contribution to Gothic fiction. Her first

book was *Original Poems on Several Occasions* (1769). In its "Address to the Reader" she noted that "popular taste runs strongly toward music" and included an essay on musical composition and *Ruth. An Oratorio.* She wrote six romances, her earliest published in 1772, and *The Progress of Romance* (1785) is an important contribution to early literary criticism of the novel. She also wrote a book on the education of women, *Plans of Education* (1792), and was an excellent translator of works that included John Barclay's *Argenis* (1621), a political historical romance in Latin.

ROBINSON, MARY DARBY (1758–1800). Educated by her genteel Bristol mother and in the school run by the sisters of Hannah More, Robinson taught for a while in her mother's school. Her father was a sea captain of Irish descent, probably born in Newfoundland, who lost the family money speculating on cod-, salmon-, and seal-trading posts in Labrador. Her husband, Thomas Robinson, was profligate, and her publishing career began with *Verses* (1775) while she was in debtors' prison with him. She began acting at Drury Lane in 1776, entranced the Prince of Wales, the future George IV, as Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*, and became his mistress; later she was Banastre ("Bloody") Tarleton's companion for ten years. From 1788 to 1791 she was a part of the Della Cruscan movement, and then she was a member of a radical circle that included Godwin, Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Williams. Her literary output is prodigious, and because she often published poetry in periodicals, recovering all of it is difficult.

ROWE, ELIZABETH SINGER (1674–1737). A Nonconformist from Ilchester, Rowe first published as Philomela in the *Athenian Mercury*, the groundbreaking periodical by the eccentric John Dunton, who also brought out her first collection of poems in 1696. Her poems also appeared in popular miscellanies. In 1710 she married Thomas Rowe, who died only five years later. She retired to Frome, received a substantial legacy, and was an active philanthropist and correspondent. Her *Friendship in Death, or Letters from the Dead to the Living* (1728) and her poetry remained popular for more than a century.

SAVAGE, MARY (fl. 1763–1777). Nothing is known of this engaging poet beyond what is offered in the prefatory letter to her two-volume *Poems on Various Subjects and Occasions* (1777), although some scholars offer speculations about her based on a George Savage who attended King's College, Cambridge. This letter to an unidentified "Miss E.B." may in fact be a parody of dedicatory *apologeias* for writing, as she calls attention to such stock phrases as "at the desire of several Persons of Quality" and concludes by saying that "the Approbation of the World will be best shown by buying up my first Edition, and calling for a second." Although obviously well read in the poetry of her time and earlier, Savage claims to be uneducated "even to the Grammar of her native Language" and to have the care of a large family. She also describes herself as having "a Disposition rather inclined to gaiety" and "the Spirit of Contradiction," both of which are apparent in her poetry.

SCOTT, MARY (1752?–1793). The author of *The Female Advocate* (1774) married the Dissenting minister and teacher John Taylor in 1788. That year she published *Messiah; a Poem* for the benefit of the General Hospital at Bath. Taylor became a Quaker in 1793 and moved the family to Bristol and Manchester; their son John Edward founded the *Manchester Guardian*. The daughter of a linen merchant in Somerset, Scott and her husband lived

for a while in the house Elizabeth Singer Rowe had owned. She was a friend of Helen Maria Williams and a correspondent of Anna Seward, for whom she wrote a poem congratulating her on the publication of her *Monody on Major André.*

SEWARD, ANNA (1742–1809). Seward lived in the Bishop's Palace in Lichfield from 1754, even after her father, canon of the Lichfield Cathedral, died. She was well educated and a prodigious reader. Her poems published in the 1780s on Captain Cook, Major André, General Eliott, and others made her "Our British Muse," recorder and celebrant of British men and events. Her verse novel *Louisa* (1784) required five editions. She became something of a literary arbiter and monument. In venues such as the *Gentleman's Magazine* she fearlessly pitted her opinions against Samuel Johnson and joined arguments over the relative merits of Dryden and Pope.

SMITH, CHARLOTTE TURNER (1749–1806). Smith's mother died when she was three, and her father, a Sussex, Surrey, and London property owner and poet, educated her at elite boarding schools and encouraged her writing. One of her childhood classmates described her as "continually composing verses." Married at age fifteen to Benjamin Smith, a Cheapside merchant, she went from a life of privilege to living over a shop. She was in debtors' prison when the first edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* appeared in 1784. Better known as a novelist than as a poet, she published ten novels between 1788 and 1798. These novels trace international political movements and wars. One of her translations, *Les causes célèbres et interessantes* (1735–45), includes what we now know as *The Return of Martin Guerre*, which Natalie Zemon Davis has described as a primary document about the status of woman within early bourgeois culture. A lengthy Chancery suit over the inheritance that had made her marriage desirable to her family lasted for more than thirty years, and the funds were not disbursed until after her death. In her last years she moved frequently; she is buried in the churchyard of Stoke Church, Guildford, Surrey.

TALBOT, CATHERINE (1721–1770). A member of a family of Church of England clerics, Talbot and her widowed mother lived with Thomas and Catherine Secker, who educated her; Thomas became dean of St. Paul's and the archbishop of Canterbury. She circulated manuscripts from the time she was very young but published little. Upon her death, her mother gave her manuscripts to Elizabeth Carter, who published Talbot's *Reflections on the Seven Days of the Week* (1770), *Essays on Various Subjects* (1771), and in 1772 a volume of essays, dialogues, pastorals, allegories, imitations of Ossian, and poems. Carter's nephew Montagu Pennington edited Talbot's *Works* (1809). *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot* (1809) display Talbot's mind and her importance to Elizabeth Carter's career, and manuscript poems and the poetry and commentary Eliza Berkeley released to the *Gentleman's Magazine* gloss the attachment sacrificed by Talbot and George Berkeley.

THOMAS, ANN (fl. 1782–1795). Almost nothing is known about Ann Thomas except what we learn from the title page of her subscription volume of poetry, *Poems on Various Subjects, by Mrs. Ann Thomas, of Millbrook, Cornwall, an officer's widow of the Royal Navy* (1784), which was published in Plymouth, Cornwall. In 1795 she published a novel by subscription; she was still living in Millbrook, near Plymouth, at that time.

THOMAS, ELIZABETH (1675–1731). Thomas's father, a member of the Inner Temple, died when she was two, and she educated herself. She showed a few poems to John Dryden, who complimented them as "too good to be a Woman's." She was engaged to Richard Gwinnet for seventeen years, but he died in 1717, before they married. During this time she was reputed to be the mistress of Henry Cromwell, a dandy, social butterfly, and occasional contributor to poetic miscellanies. Gwinnet left her £600, of which she received only about £213, and by 1727 she was in Fleet Prison for debt, remaining there until 1729. In that year she sold letters from Cromwell, Dryden, Chudleigh, Pope, and John Norris to Edmund Curll. Her *Miscellany Poems* (1722) was reissued as *Poems on Several Occasions* in 1726 and 1727. In Pope's *Dunciad* she is "Curll's Corinna." At the time of her death she was writing an autobiography to accompany an edition of her correspondence with Gwinnet; it is included in the posthumously published *Honourable Lovers* (2 vols., 1731–32). Ironically, after her release from prison she rented lodgings on Fleet Street, where she died in February 1731.

TOLLET, ELIZABETH (1694–1754). Tollet grew up in the Tower of London, where her father resided as commissioner of the Navy. With the encouragement of Isaac Newton, her father educated her carefully in subjects such as mathematics and history, and she was fluent in French, Italian, and Latin. Tollet was described as a "little, crooked woman." *Poems on Several Occasions* was published in 1724, and a larger collection appeared the year after she died. *Hypatia*, which begins, "What cruel laws depress the female kind," deserves to be studied with the best of the feminist protest poems. Tower lore appears in some of her poems, including *Anne Boleyn to King Henry VIII* and *Written by Lady Jane Grey, when Prisoner in the Tower*. Some of her poems, including many paraphrases of the Psalms, were admired by her contemporaries, and her poems praising such public figures as Newton, Handel, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Anne Finch display her wide interests and acute judgment.

TUITE, LADY ELIZA DOROTHEA COBBE (1764–1850). Irish by birth, Tuite published *Poems by Lady Tuite* (1796), which enjoyed a second edition in 1799. Some of its sixteen songs were popular; among them was the timely *Come drink with me a social glass*. It includes the line, "When we have sunk the Frenchman's pride." *Miscellaneous Poetry*, actually an augmented edition of *Poems*, appeared in 1841. Like so many of the poets of her generation, she also wrote a children's book, *Edwina and Mary* (1838). She may have been living in Bath at the time of her death.

WILLIAMS, HELEN MARIA (1761–1827). Williams, a Nonconformist, was born in London to a Welsh army officer and a Scottish mother. Her father died in 1762, and the family moved to Berwick-upon-Tweed, where her mother carefully educated her and her sister. She moved to London in 1781 and quickly became a star in the literary sky and was hailed as a poetic genius. At age twenty-one she published *Edwin and Eltruda* (1782), a metrical tale about the Wars of the Roses, and then made all the papers with *An Ode on the Peace* (1783), a post–American war reflection on the benefits of peace, and with *Peru* (1784), a condemnation of Pizarro's conquest of the Indians. The 1786 collection of her poems listed over 1500 subscribers, and William Wordsworth's first published poem is a tribute to her. *Julia: A*

Novel, Interspersed with some Poetical Pieces (1790) is an important Wertheriad. She visited France in 1790 and settled there in 1792. She is best known today for her *Letters Written in France*, eight eyewitness books that gave her the reputation with modern literary historians as "a foreign correspondent, interpreting French history to readers in England." She became a naturalized citizen of France in 1817 and is buried in Paris.

YEARSLEY, ANN CROMARTIE (1752–1806). Yearsley was the daughter of working-class parents in Clifton and followed her mother's trade as a milkwoman. Her mother taught her to read and write. She married a yeoman at age twenty-two and had seven children. Hannah More offered the nearly destitute family charity in 1784, and when she saw Yearsley's poems, she edited them and arranged their subscription publication. *Poems on Several Occasions* (1785) and its subsequent editions earned six hundred pounds, and acrimonious disputes over it and the editing of the poems resulted. In addition to poetry, Yearsley wrote a novel and a play, but her reputation is based on her poetry, perhaps especially *Poems on Various Subjects* (1787) and *The Rural Lyre* (1796). Anna Seward called her "a proud and jealous spirit," and Yearsley once wrote a poem attacking a powerful man for punishing her children for playing on his property. In 1793 she opened a circulating library at Bristol Hotwells, and in 1803 she retired to Melksham, Wiltshire, where she died.

Notes

Plan of the Book

1. Among typical examples, the standard edition of Anne Finch's poems, *The Poems of Anne, Countess of Winchilsea*, ed. Myra Reynolds, has long been out of print, and Letitia Pilkington's poetry was printed by Mellen Press and is held by only fifty-seven libraries. Two of the best places to access many of these poets' work are http://lion.chadwyck.com and http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/.

2. Harriet Kramer Linkin and Stephen C. Behrendt, "Introduction: Recovering Romanticism and Women Poets," in Linkin and Behrendt, *Romanticism and Women Poets*, 1.

3. Armstrong, "Gush of the Feminine," 15. An eloquent argument for, among other things, "keeping open the doors of reception" appears in Linkin and Behrendt's introduction to *Romanticism and Women Poets*, 5.

4. Ellison, "Transatlantic Cultures of Sensibility," 85.

5. See, for example, Heilbrun, "Bringing the Spirit Back to English Studies"; and Ecker, *Feminist Aesthetics*.

6. On the closed and open canon, see Lerner, "Subverting the Canon."

7. Perkins, "Literary Classifications," 254.

8. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 55.

9. Margaret Ezell offers a good summary of the contingency of the canon in relation to women writers in *Writing Women's Literary History*, 55–65.

10. Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, 16.

11. Lerner, "Subverting the Canon," 356.

12. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar introduced the concept of "palimpsest" into feminist criticism in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 73 et passim; and Judith Butler writes of "parodic proliferation" in *Gender Trouble*, 174–77, 185–90, quotation from 175. A palimpsest is literally a document that has been written upon more than once and upon which traces of the earlier writings can be discerned.

13. King, *Jane Barker, Exile*, 52; see also 53 and 136–37. And for an important introduction to some of the problems with preoccupation with "themes of exclusion, estrangement, and gender opposition," see King, "Cowley among the Women," 43–45.

14. Lonsdale, *New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse*, xxxvii and xxxix, quotation from xxxix.

15. E. W. Pitcher records Mary Whateley Darwall's and Elizabeth Griffith's willingness to publish in one of the chief proponents of restraints on women, the *Westminster Magazine*. Griffith wrote, "Few are the pleasures we possess . . . / From female friendship now restrain'd, / What can they more to vex?" "Mary Whateley Darwall's Poem."

16. Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 172.

17. Stanton, "Statistical Profile," 261. These numbers are probably low; the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue project has continued to reveal books of poetry, both anthologies and individuals' works published in the century.

18. Jackson, *Annals of English Verse;* Jackson, *Romantic Poetry by Women.*

19. Lillian Robinson, quoted in Kolodny, "Dancing through the Minefield," 148.

20. Raycroft, "From Charlotte Smith to Nehemiah Higginbottom," 364. Raycroft is speaking of Smith alone.

21. Hacker, "A Few Cranky Paragraphs," 193.

22. McGann, "History, Herstory, Their Story, Ourstory," 204.

23. I especially regret omitting the working-class and abolition poets. Among the notable studies of the former are Landry, *Muses of Resistance;* Christmas, *Lab'ring Muses;* Morag Shiach, "Peasant Poets," in Shiach, *Discourse on Popular Culture;* Kord, *Women Peasant Poets;* Doody, "Sensuousness in the Poetry of Eighteenth-Century Women Poets"; and Greene, *Mary Leapor.* Some studies of women's abolitionist poetry in the period are Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others;* Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties;* Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery;* Midgley, *Women against Slavery;* Coleman, "Conspicuous Consumption"; and Eberle, "Tales of Truth?"

24. Catherine Gallagher speculates that "the charismatic woman writer is not so much legitimated by her precedents as she is struggling to legitimate them." "History of Precedent," 325. See also Finch's *Tale of the Miser and the Poet*, in Reynolds, 191–94. A few critics have recognized Rowe's empowering example. Cf. Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 153–54.

25. Brereton, *Poems on Several Occasions*, xxix–xxx. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Brereton's poems are from this edition.

26. See Guest, *Small Change*, 115–33.

27. *On Reading Mrs. Carter's Poems in Manuscript*, quoted by Stuart Curran in "Romantic Women Poets," 163–64. Curran points out that Barbauld identifies with Rowe, a Dissenter like herself, "through assimilating Carter" in her *Verses on Mrs. Rowe.* Ibid., 161–64.

28. Rosalie Colie traces how ancient the system of genres based on content is and how pervasive its acceptance in the Renaissance. The eighteenth century inherited this genre system and seems to have accepted it comfortably. *Resources of Kind*, esp. 1–31.

29. As Adrienne Rich once said, the "place on a map is also a place in history." Quoted in Gilmore, *Autobiographics*, 7. The image is so vivid for me because of Richard Helgerson's fine *Forms of Nationhood*, which emphasizes how mapping space is mapping power. Roger Lonsdale and others use the metaphor and call for a new landscape, as Lonsdale argued eloquently in *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse* and his *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets.* Yet in the former he includes relatively few women and often selects already familiar poems rather than expanding our sense of the poet. Richard Terry in his *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past* also calls for a new landscape, yet he largely confines women poets to chapter 8.

30. Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, 1–2.

31. Radner and Lanser, "Strategies of Coding in Women's Cultures," 4. I rely in part on Radner and Lanser's taxonomy of coding strategies, on 10–24.

32. Foucault, "Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity," 171.

33. Donna Landry explains the importance of such spaces as central to the vision of nation. *Invention of the Countryside.* See also O'Brien, "Imperial Georgic," 160–61.

34. See Pascoe, Introduction, 51.

35. Here and throughout, unless otherwise stated, by *aesthetics* I mean simply "the sense of the beautiful." I am aware that *aesthetics* is a highly political category that has never been demonstrated to be separable from time and culture, and I treat it as such.

36. Critics such as Alicia Ostriker have suggested that "revisionist mythmaking in women's poetry may offer us one significant means of redefining ourselves and consequently our culture." "Thieves of Language."

ONE: Introduction

Epigraph: Eliza Tuite, *Epistle to the Countess Dowager of E——, London, 1795*, in Fullard, 53.

1. P. J. Marshall, Introduction, 15, 4.

2. This quotation is from Dickinson, "Popular Politics and Radical Ideas," 96; see this chapter and his introduction in Dickinson, *Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain.*

3. Under common law, dower was set at one-third of an estate; strict settlement allowed daughters to be passed over entirely and changed jointure, the provision for widows, into a more vulnerable charge upon the estate. See Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, 36, 95, 97, 199–203; see also Gillian Skinner, "Women's Status as Legal and Civic Subjects: 'A worse condition than slavery itself'?" 91–110.

4. Lonsdale, 190. The best explanation is probably Betty Rizzo's in *Companions without Vows*, 242–54.

5. Barbara Benedict describes the market forces in "Publishing and Reading Poetry."

6. Ibid., 76–77; Sullivan, *British Literary Magazines;* Forster, "The Self-Impanelled Jury"; Adburgham, *Women in Print.*

7. Forster, "Review Journals and the Reading Public," 177.

8. Elizabeth Kraft, "Barbauld," *DLB*, 109:16; Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past*, 265–76, quotation from 265.

9. King, *Jane Barker, Exile*, 36.

10. See Fairer, "Creating a National Poetry"; and Justice, *Manufacturers of Literature*, 133.

11. Messenger, " 'Daughter of Shenstone'?" 471.

12. Lonsdale, 373; see also xxxvii and 422. Although he does not mention economic need and charity, Dustin Griffin offers a good overview of the increase in subscription publishing by women poets in *Literary Patronage in England*, 190–91.

13. Mary Masters, *To a Gentleman*, in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 44–45.

14. *Critical Review* 13 (March 1761): 180.

15. Quoted by Harriet Guest in *Small Change*, 169 and 71. Guest argues that this period actually displayed considerable ambivalence about women writers. Other critics, such as Harriet D. Jump, date the backlash to the 1810s. See Jump, *Women's Writing of the Romantic Period*, xiv–xvi.

16. This edition, published by Charles Cotterell with careful rearrangement of her poems, which obscures the cumulative impact of the Rosania and Lucasia poems, was prefaced by a letter she had prepared for Cotterell to show to people, which she sent with the letter expressing her willingness to work with him to prepare an authorized edition of her poetry. See Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics*, 74–80; Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, 132–41;

Andreadis, "Sapphic-Platonics of Katherine Philips"; and Swaim, "Matching the 'Matchless Orinda' to Her Times."

17. Epilogue to *Sir Patient Fancy;* see the same aggressive stance in "Good, Sweet, Honey, Sugar-candied Reader," prefixed to *The Dutch Lover.*

18. Swaim, "Matching the 'Matchless Orinda' to Her Times," 82–83.

19. Jane Brereton, *Epistle to Mrs. Anne Griffiths. Written from London, in 1718,* 30–36, quotation from 34–35.

20. Eger, "Fashioning a Female Canon," 212.

21. These poems are collected in Behn, *Works of Aphra Behn,* 1:190–221.

22. Barash, *English Women's Poetry,* 290, 287.

23. This is Jane Spencer's conclusion about the novel at the end of century. She calls it a "feminized space," an idea that, of course, has great resonance with current critical opinion about the Age of Sensibility and the "need" for the male Romantic poets to "reclaim" poetry and, especially, the sonnet, "Women Writers and the Eighteenth-Century Novel," 233.

24. Manners, *Review of Poetry,* 5.

25. Ashfield, *Romantic Women Poets,* xii.

26. On the mobilization of formerly passive groups, see Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory,* 148–52.

27. See Mandell, "Those Disjointed Limbs of Gigantic Power"; and Ellison, "Politics of Fancy in the Age of Sensibility," quotation from 231. Ellison cites Barbauld and Phyllis Wheatley as examples of women sharing an idiom.

28. Mellor, "Criticism of Their Own," 33. Mellor begins her discussion in the 1790s with glances at the 1780s and gives a good summary of women's literary power. See esp. 34.

29. Mary Scott, *Female Advocate,* 29, 35. This praise may be especially interesting because Barbauld would be so roundly condemned for her great political poem, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven.* See Keach, "Regency Prophecy"; and Favretti, "Politics of Vision."

30. Quoted from *The Female Aegis; or, The Duties of Woman* (1798) in Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion,* 56.

31. James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor, introduction to their *Practice and Representation of Reading in England,* 8.

32. Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination,* 184.

33. For a good overview of the changes in the book trade and the impact on reading, see Raven, "Book Trades." Brewer surveys how readers gained access to books and gives figures on some libraries in *Pleasures of the Imagination,* 175–82.

34. Benedict, "Publishing and Reading Poetry," 63.

35. Fergus, "Provincial Servants' Reading," 203, 217, 220, 219.

36. See the illustrations of people singing in Leppert, *Music and Image.* The fact that he is writing exclusively about instrumental music makes the numerous depictions of singing all the more striking.

37. Fergus, "Provincial Servants' Reading," 217.

38. On this miscellany with working-class subscribers, see Suarez, "Production and Consumption of the Eighteenth-Century Poetic Miscellany," 220–22.

39. See ibid., 217–18; and Pickering, *Music in the British Isles.*

40. Sheridan, *Course of Lectures on Elocution,* 10.

41. Quoted in Michaelson, *Speaking Volumes,* 127.

42. Sitter, "Introduction," 8.

43. For readers, especially novel-readers, as active analysts and judges, see Backscheider, "Novel's Gendered Space," 15–18.

44. Quoted in Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market*, 62.

45. On discipline, see Tadmor, " 'In the even my wife read to me,' " 162–74, quotation from 171.

46. Michaelson, *Speaking Volumes*, 113; Michaelson's book contains an important discussion of the elocutionary movement. This section of this chapter has been influenced by her book.

47. [Cobb], *English Readings*, 5, 6. The characters' choices for reading are Sterne and Shakespeare.

48. In her *Memoirs* Siddons recounted the famous incident of the near riot after her return from Ireland, allegedly after refusing to perform in other actors' benefits. She emphasized the gallantry of her husband, her brother, and Richard Sheridan and did not mention such circumstances as her costar's failure to make the traditional defense of her and the performance of the play. Donkin, "Mrs. Siddons Looks Back in Anger," 282–85. For accounts of her retirement, see Pascoe, 23–24; Manvell, *Sarah Siddons*, 297; Parsons, *Incomparable Siddons*, 265–67; and Campbell, *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, 345–47 (Twiss's poem is printed on 346–47). Several reviewers objected to the recitation of poetry and compared her unfavorably to William Lewis, who had spoken a few words in prose "with faltering voice" upon his 1811 retirement from the stage. *Examiner*, 5 July 1812, 13.

49. Printed in "Covent-Garden Theatre," *London Times*, 30 June 1812, 3, emphasis mine. I am grateful to my research assistant Elizabeth Childs for her research on Siddons's retirement.

50. Siddons never ended this effort. The *London Times* for 29 June 1812 carried an advertisement titled "Mrs. Siddons to the Public," in which she denied that the boxes for her retirement night had been allocated differently than for regular benefit nights, 3.

51. "Theatrical Journal," *European Magazine and London Review* 62 (July 1812): 44. Garrick had mentioned several Shakespeare parts and written, "The strong impressions of their art decay, / Your children cannot feel what you have known," 44.

52. Among those who wanted a "short and plain expression of her feelings in graceful prose" were the *London Times*, 30 June 1812, 3, and the *Examiner*, 5 July 1812, 12.

53. The phrase "woven into the fabric of genteel social life" is from Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 611; Brewer is describing Seward's opinion, while I am expanding it to a general attitude. The second quotation is from Lovell, "Subjective Powers?" 37–38. Jacqueline Pearson gives some evidence that reading poetry was problematic for women in *Women's Reading in Britain*, esp. 57–64.

54. Quoted in Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion*, 57.

55. Zimmerman, "Charlotte Smith's Lessons," 121.

56. Laurence Lerner seems to demand that women offer us something "that we do not get from male poets," and he says that he can only give a "qualified yes" that they do. "Subverting the Canon," 355.

57. Ezell, "Re-visioning the Restoration," 138.

58. Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste*, 94.

59. The quotation is from Hinton, "Centering Margins," 181. See also Beach, *Artifice and Indeterminacy*.

60. Messenger, *His and Hers*, 72. Judith Butler similarly observes that even if "one *is* a woman, that is surely not *all* one is." *Gender Trouble*, 3.

61. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), line 365.

62. Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry*, 9.

63. The numerous statements about the capacity of women provide a theme in Roger Lonsdale's introduction to *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*.

64. Some feminist critics and philosophers have made such a conception part of the basis of a feminist aesthetic. See, for example, Lauter, "Re-enfranchising Art," 32.

65. Sprat, "Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. Abraham Cowley," unpaginated.

66. Mary Masters, *The Defense of my self*, in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 26–27.

67. Ann Messenger is one of the few critics who has done a sustained analysis of women and a poetic genre. She notes that some women poets probably "recognized the femininity of pastoral and practiced it for that reason," while other "sometimes felt uncomfortable, diminished" by its low status. *Pastoral Tradition*, 9. For example, Paul Alpers's detailed study of pastoral modes and the historical variety of pastoral features, *What Is Pastoral?* does not discuss any pastorals by women.

68. Constantia Grierson, *To Mrs. Mary Barber*, in Colman and Thornton, *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, 1:244–45.

69. Pascoe, "Mary Robinson and the Literary Marketplace," 260.

70. DuPlessis, "Pink Guitar," 301.

71. Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, 18.

72. Susanna Blamire, *The Nabob*, in Blamire, *Susanna Blamire: The Poetical Works*, 198–202.

73. See *Edwin and Alicia*, ibid., 136–41, in which Edwin dies on the bank of the Ganges and Alicia dies of grief soon thereafter.

74. This opinion may exist quite early in women's writings. Eliza Haywood, for instance, has Heartlove and Malaventure die of fevers in *Cleomelia, or, The Generous Mistress*. I am grateful to Ahsan Chowdhury for this reference.

75. Anne Bannerman, *To the Ocean*, in *Poems by Anne Bannerman* (1800), 82.

76. Bannerman alludes at least once to James Ridley's *Tales of the Genii* (1764), a collection of tales allegedly translated from the Persian by "Sir Charles Morell." *The Tales of the Genii* gained in popularity, with several new editions published about the time of her poem (1793, 1794, 1799, and 1800); it is even listed as one of David Copperfield's ten books. I am grateful to my research assistant Jessie Jordan for this information.

77. This reference to the Negro pearl diver is one of Bannerman's most interesting contributions to the abolition poetry of her time; in a note she explains that the Spaniards force slaves to dive in the Bay of Panama. *Poems by Anne Bannerman* (1800), 19.

78. Helen Maria Williams, *Poem on the Bill Lately Passed*, 15.

79. Messenger, *Woman and Poet in the Eighteenth Century*, 203; Fry, *Charlotte Smith*, 12–13.

80. Charlotte Smith, *Conversations Introducing Poetry*, 2:134.

81. Lanser, "Sexing Narratology," 172.

82. DuPlessis, "Pink Guitar," 301.

83. Spivak, *Post-Colonial Critic*, 146.

84. Lillian Robinson, "Treason Our Text," 105, 106. Paula Feldman notes in "Endurance and Forgetting," 19, that "the establishment of a literary reputation and its maintenance require active championing and an ongoing effort to keep that reputation alive and prospering."

85. Summarized by Novak, "Defoe," 20.

86. Watt, *Rise of the Novel*, 134.

87. Sprat, "Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. Abraham Cowley," unpaginated. William Congreve's *Pindarique Ode* is a famous example of critical agreement.

88. Howard Weinbrot designates their impact in *Britannia's Issue*, 331–58. He points out that "by the time we reach mid-century, much of the ode's energy has been lost," 332. See also Trotter, *Poetry of Abraham Cowley*, 109–42; and Sprat, "Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. Abraham Cowley," unpaginated. I am grateful to my colleague Timothy Dykstal for extending my original reading of Sprat's relationship to the canon.

89. Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, 158.

90. These are psychological terms. The work-adapted person has learned, for instance, to go to a repetitive factory job, perform the work, and leave it mentally as well as physically at the end of the shift, while work-integrated people, like college faculty members, blend their working, domestic, and leisure lives and "integrate" work into their personalities.

91. Dobrée, *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century*, 173.

92. Quoted in Heilbrum, "Bringing the Spirit Back to English Studies," 24.

93. Theodore Roethke lists this as one of the chief responsibilities of the poet. "Poetry of Louise Bogan," 134.

94. Jane Brereton, *To Mrs. Mary Hale; Jan. 1, 1728. With Mr. Waller's Poems*, 87.

95. Mary Leapor, *Hymn to Morning*, in Leapor, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748), 25.

96. Plimpton, " 'Inconstant Constancy,' " 3, 14.

97. Armstrong, "Gush of the Feminine," 15.

TWO: Anne Finch and What Women Wrote

Epigraph: William Wordsworth, quoted in Curran, xix.

1. Greer, *Slip-shod Sibyls*, xii.

2. Quotations from Bogan, "Heart and the Lyre," 336.

3. Mallinson, "Anne Finch," 45.

4. Gross, *Byron's "Corbeau Blanc,"* 1.

5. Charlotte Smith, *Conversations Introducing Poetry*, 2:28.

6. Mary Whateley Darwall, *Impromptu*, in Darwall, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 1:81–82.

7. Austen, *Emma*, 44–51, quotation from 44.

8. Savage, *Poems on Various Subjects and Occasions*, 1:98–100. All quotations from Savage's poems are from this edition.

9. Greer, *Slip-shod Sibyls*, xiii.

10. Quoted in Fullard, 7.

11. Plimpton, " 'Inconstant Constancy,' " 17–18.

12. Elizabeth Tollet, "The Triumvirate of Poets," in Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1724), 56.

13. Brower, "Lady Winchilsea and the Poetic Tradition," 62. *Augustan* is, of course, a problematic term, especially since the publication of Howard Weinbrot's *Augustus Caesar in "Augustan" England.* It continues to suggest, however, the valorization of an urbane and elegant style marked by the use of harmony, proportion, and dignity and the imitation of classical writers such as Horace and Virgil. As Charles Hinnant says, we now understand it as "a historically contested and politically constructed category." Hinnant, 28.

14. Mary Barber, *A True Tale*, in Barber, *Poetry of Mary Barber*, 68–69.

15. Jane Brereton, *To Mr. Thomas Griffith, at the University of Glasgow. Written in London, 1720*, 59.

16. Jane Brereton, *An Epistle to Sir Richard Steele; on the Death of Mr. Addison*, 65. "Stagyrite" refers to his play *Cato.*

17. Austen, *Persuasion*, 104.

18. *To Mr. Prior from a Lady Unknown*, in Reynolds, 102. Hinnant (77) and others note that the attribution of this poem is not certain.

19. Prior is not even represented in Sherman, *Restoration and the Eighteenth Century.*

20. Scott, 2:219, quoted in Ashmun, *Singing Swan*, 125.

21. Mary Masters, *The Female Triumph*, in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 8–9. Cockburn (then Trotter) had been satirized as Calista in the anonymous *Female Wits* (1696), and this poem serves as something of an answer to the play's representation of her. After some years of retirement, Cockburn had published *A Vindication of Mr. Locke's Christian Principles* (1727) and a poem, *Busts set up at the Queen's Hermitage* (1732), for the queen. Masters's poem invokes Minerva, Philosophy, and her "Treasures of Knowledge and rich Mines of Wit," all appropriate for the successful playwright, poet, and participant in philosophical debate. Joan Reteshka points out that Delarivière Manley also satirized Cockburn as Calista in *The New Atalantis* (1709); I am grateful for her contribution to this note.

22. In Canto I he rehearses the Oxford Aristotelian position that the soul is everywhere in the body and the Cambridge Cartesian position that it is in the brain.

23. Jane Brereton, *A Query*, 78–80.

24. Linda Merians, e-mail message to author, 23 May 1998.

25. Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, 47. On Pope's influence on women poets, see also Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World;* and Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and His Eighteenth-Century Women Readers.*

26. Samuel Johnson, "Pope," in Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, 3:251.

27. Mary Masters, *To the Right Honourable the Earl of Burlington*, in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 6–7.

28. Manners, *Review of Poetry*, 24–25.

29. On the canon and progress poems, see Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past*, 51–57.

30. Other examples are listed in Fullard, 10–11; a number of male poets, perhaps including William Cowper, William Shenstone, and George Crabbe, are equally difficult to present to the modern reader. It should be noted, however, that the metrical tale grew in importance throughout the Romantic period.

31. The exception is, of course, Alexander Pope. Donna Landry's work shows sustained and high-level attention to women poets' relationship to Pope's work. See Landry, *Muses of Resistance;* and Mell, *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers*, which includes a number of essays on the topic.

32. Mendez, *On the Death of a Lady's Owl.*

33. Mary Savage, *The Disaster*, 2:84.

34. Hinnant, 37 and 16–17. Hinnant too recognizes the extraordinary diversity of the poetic forms in which Finch wrote. Among his valuable insights is that the selection of her poems for inclusion in anthologies depended on the historical interests of the time. This chapter has benefited from Hinnant's book and from McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry.*

35. The classic article on this observation is Brower, "Lady Winchilsea and the Poetic Tradition."

36. Carson, "Sappho Shock," 223.

37. The counts are from Jamie Stanesa, "Anne Finch," *DLB*, 95:67; and Lewis, *English Fable*, 131. Like Mark Loveridge in *History of the Augustan Fable*, 1–6, I assume that *fable* is not a term for inchoate texts but that the verse fable has a coherent history and that writers understood the various manifestations of fable.

38. Loveridge, *History of the Augustan Fable*, 61.

39. Reynolds, cxi. Reynolds discusses Finch's fables in the introduction, cviii–cxi. Jayne Lewis notes in "Invading the 'Transparent Laberynth,' " 169, that Finch was the first to "turn some of [La Fontaine's] fables into English."

40. Loveridge, *History of the Augustan Fable*, 41.

41. Prior wrote relatively few fables, but he was known as "an English La Fontaine"; according to his biographer's the fables were "immensely popular in the eighteenth century." Eves, *Matthew Prior*, 217–18.

42. Jayne Lewis explains the appeal La Fontaine had for women in general and, to some extent, for Finch in *English Fable*, 135–44. Among Finch's fables based on La Fontaine are *The Goute and the Spider*, *A Miller, his Son, and their Ass*, *The King and the Shepherd*, *Jupiter and the Farmer*, *The Atheist and the Acorn*, *The Prevalence of Custom*, *The Brass-Pot, and Stone-Jugg*, *The Tradesman and the Scholar*, and *The Man Bitten by Fleas*, and among those based on L'Estrange is *There's No To-Morrow*. Hinnant points out that Finch habitually adapted and even transformed the fables of La Fontaine and L'Estrange and that the words *paraphrase*, *translate*, and *imitate* seldom correctly describe what she did. Hinnant, 168–70.

43. Loveridge, *History of the Augustan Fable*, 55. On the publication history of Finch's poetry, see Hinnant, 18–22.

44. Mary Pritchard, "Fables Moral and Political," quoted in Lewis, *English Fable*, 3. Two of Finch's fables that seem especially good examples of distinctively English feelings are *The Goute and the Spider* and *The King and the Shepherd*.

45. Nandy, *Intimate Enemy*, xiii.

46. Ibid.

47. Reynolds, 165–66. On the differences between La Fontaine's and Finch's fables, see Lewis, *English Fable*, 151–53.

48. Finch employs fables well to remark on the emerging money and credit economy. As Hinnant says, in fables such as *The Tradesman and the Scholar* Finch exposes "the vulnerability of those who emerged to prominence in the new moneyed society." Esp. 176–85, quotation from 181. The catalog of dangers to merchants in *Man's Injustice towards Providence* is almost as long as any Defoe gave in his fiction and nonfiction, as suggested by the line "No Wreck at Sea, nor in the Publick Banks." Reynolds, 196.

49. In the vicious party strife during Queen Anne's reign Harley and his propagandists attempted to unite a centrist group of Whigs and Tories under the banner of moderation, a move many viewed as hypocritical. On this struggle, see Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, chap. 10; and Downie, *Robert Harley and the Press*.

50. The fullest treatment of women and the pastoral is Messenger, *Pastoral Tradition*. See also McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 128–58; and McGovern, "Finch, Pope, and Swift," 106.

51. Hinnant calls *An Invitation to Dafnis* a pastoral and interprets it as exposing the Finches' retirement as a "fiction" that cannot obliterate political realities, thus making the

poem a kind of anti-pastoral. He positions her pastorals with the amatory pastorals identified with the court (Hinnant, 38–40); his discussion of this later poem is on 138–39. Ann Messenger also discusses Finch's pastoral poetry at length in her *Pastoral Tradition*.

52. For a good explication of the poem as a rewriting, see Carolyn D. Williams, "Poetry, Pudding, and Epictetus," 9, 11–15.

53. Elizabeth Rowe, *Love and Friendship: A Pastoral*, in *Miscellaneous Works*, 1:11–13. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Rowe's poetry are from this edition, abbreviated *Misc. Works*.

54. Nancy K. Miller, "Arachnologies," esp. 80–81, 84–90, and 96–97.

55. McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 70.

56. McGovern, "Finch, Pope, and Swift," 114–19.

57. See McGovern's discussion of *Aristomenes* and the circumstances of its composition in *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 61–63.

58. Mary Whateley Darwall, *Epilogue Written for a Favorite Actress*, in Darwall, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 2:76.

59. Messenger, *Woman and Poet in the Eighteenth Century*, 28; see also 103–5, 134–35, and 173–74.

60. Barber, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 118 and 243.

61. Clara Reeve, *A Prologue to a Play That Never was Acted*, in Reeve, *Original Poems on Several Occasions*, 39–40. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from her poems are from this edition.

62. Reynolds, 4; Hinnant, 72. Hinnant discusses most of these poems in detail in his book, especially in chap. 3; see also 169–73, on *The Critick and the Writer of Fables*. Although I do not always read them as he does or always agree with his conclusions, I have profited from his treatment of them.

63. *An Epistle from Ardelia to Mrs. Randolph* represents the same idea. Reynolds, 95–96; see also Keith, "Poetics of Anne Finch," 471–72.

64. Finch locates this poem halfway through her *Miscellany*. Reynolds, 153. Hinnant calls it "an adaptation" of La Fontaine's "Contre ceux qui ont le Goût difficile," 169–71.

65. Jennifer Keith, e-mail message to author, 11 July 2000; see also Keith, "Poetics of Anne Finch," 467–68.

66. *Wellesley*, 58–59. Hinnant argues that Finch showed resistance to writing satire throughout her career. Hinnant, 113–17.

67. Many, like Prior's *Session of the Poets*, record both changing literary tastes and the part politics played in a poet's popularity. It is notable that Aphra Behn is unfailingly included and often given high honors; Prior, however, finds her poetry too long and her day past.

68. Reynolds reproduces Finch's single *m* with a macron, a conventional way of doubling a letter at that time.

69. See Kathryn King's pathbreaking work in *Jane Barker, Exile*, 30–38, and in "Elizabeth Singer Rowe's Tactical Use of Print and Manuscript."

70. Annabel Patterson argues, "Renaissance humanism . . . tended toward a relationship with pastoral that stressed above all its capacity to stand as a metaphor for the condition of the writer-intellectual." *Pastoral and Ideology*, 133. She does not treat women poets in her book. Harold Toliver observes that pastoral is "so variable a form" with the "capacity to devour elegies, lyrics, plays, fairy tales, masques, odes." *Pastoral*, vii; see his list of "pastoral's recurrent concerns" on the same page).

71. Charlotte Lennox, *Aminta and Delia*, in Lennox, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 19.

72. Clifford Geertz describes Deborah's role in the procession on the day before Elizabeth's coronation in "Centers, Kings, and Charisma," 155–56.

73. One of the most original essays on Finch and this topic is the final chapter by Ruth Salvaggio in *Enlightened Absence;* see 114–16. Salvaggio writes about the tapestry poem, but she had access only to a misleading quotation from it. In spite of this limitation, Salvaggio suggestively sees Finch finding "her poetic voice through the process of weaving her way through shady retreats, wandering and straying within and away from the systems of her male contemporaries," 117.

74. Sarah Fyge Egerton, *The Emulation*, in Egerton, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 108–9.

75. Sarah Fyge Egerton, *The Liberty*, ibid., 19–21.

76. Jeslyn Medoff concludes that Fyge's was the only response to *Love Given O'er* actually written by a woman. Two of the responses were anonymous, and Gould and Richard Ames, sometimes posing as women writers, kept the controversy going by responding to each other. "New Light on Sarah Fyge," 157.

77. Egerton, *Female Advocate*, 1.

78. See also Eugenia's *Female Advocate*, another response to Sprint.

79. Egerton, *Female Advocate*, 23.

80. Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain*, is a comprehensive treatment of this topic.

81. In an unpublished paper, "Elizabeth Tollet's Female 'Saints': Suzanna, Hypatia, Lady Jane Grey, and Anne Boleyn," Claudia Thomas Kairoff points out how many poems Tollet wrote about historical, captive women, all "victims of appearances." I appreciate her sharing this work.

82. Elizabeth Tollet, *Hypatia*, in Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1755), 66–72.

83. Clara Reeve, *The Parrots to Jaconetta*, 36.

84. Some of these scattered places are surprising. Delarivière Manley published three of Finch's poems, including *The Sigh* and *The Hymn*, in *The New Atalantis* (1709), McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 120–21. Ann Messenger has written about the differences of subject matter and tone between the poems Finch published and those she kept in manuscript in "Publishing without Perishing." I am not persuaded, however, that Finch was not preparing a second, major volume of poetry that survives in folio.

85. Elizabeth Tollet, *In Memory of the Countess of Winchelsea*, in Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1755), 49–50.

86. See Hinnant, 215–16. Fullard does not print it, and Lonsdale includes only 64 of the 150 lines. Robert DeMaria includes it in his *British Literature*, 546–49, as do David Fairer and Christine Gerrard in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry.* It is not included in Uphaus and Foster, *Other Eighteenth Century;* in Price, *Restoration and Eighteenth Century;* or in Sherman, *Restoration and the Eighteenth Century.* Some of these anthologies have no selections by Finch. Typical selections of Finch's poetry are those in Tillotson, Fussell, and Waingrow *Eighteenth-Century English Literature: Adam Pos'd*, *The Atheist and the Acorn*, and *Nocturnal Reverie*.

87. On the spleen, see Ober, "Eighteenth-Century Spleen."

88. See Katharine M. Rogers, "Finch's 'Candid Account' "; and Hellegers, *Handmaid to Divinity*, 147–67. Rogers and others have traced the course of this affliction in Finch's life and art. See, for example, McGovern's biographical explication of this poem in *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 159–78.

89. Hellegers says that Finch is echoing Cowley's Pindaric *Brutus*, *Handmaid to Di-*

vinity, 144. Anita Guerrini points out that Cheyne gives eighteen case studies in his *The English Malady*, eight of which are of women. Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression*, 150–51.

90. See Salvaggio, *Enlightened Absence*, 125–26.

91. Quoted in Hellegers, *Handmaid to Divinity*, 152.

92. Hellegers reads the poem as a critique of Thomas Sydenham's "Hypochondriack and Hysterick Diseases." She argues that Finch's opening echoes his statement that "hysteria [is] so strangely various, that it resembles almost all the Diseases poor Mortals are inclined to." *Handmaid to Divinity*, 148; on the contrast in treatments, see 151–66.

93. This passage has received considerable attention and markedly different interpretations. The quotation is from Brower, "Lady Winchilsea and the Poetic Tradition," 68–69, where Brower uses it to illustrate some of the Metaphysical elements in her poetry.

94. McGovern speculates that Finch probably suffered from manic-depressive syndrome, an ailment now known to be uncommonly prevalent in writers and creative artists. *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 160.

95. Salvaggio, borrowing the concepts of Gilbert and Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic*, says the poem "shows not only the personal cost to the woman who writes, but the cost of writing 'as a woman' during the age that figured woman in terms of disease." *Enlightened Absence*, 123. I would say that this identification is a later one and perhaps overstated. That Salvaggio recognizes *The Spleen* as a poem about the writing life, however, is important.

96. Katharine M. Rogers, "Finch's 'Candid Account,' " 19.

97. Quoted in Ober, "Eighteenth-Century Spleen," 227–28. Ober describes Stukeley's carrying on of the idea that there could be a reciprocal relationship between religion and melancholy, 239–40; see also Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression*, 142–43.

98. The only other critic to see the ending in anything approaching this light is Hinnant, who briefly likens it to William Styron's *Darkness Visible*. Hinnant, 225.

99. Katharine M. Rogers, "Finch's 'Candid Account,' " 19.

100. The artistic and thematic contributions of the Pindaric form have been much discussed. See, for example, Hellegers, *Handmaid to Divinity*, 145–47 and 158–61; and McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 167–78. Hellegers argues that Finch's "appropriation of the language of the spleen and of the form of the Pindaric" is ironic and reflects "her ongoing resistance to the specters of domestic containment and masculine devaluation by which she is haunted." *Handmaid to Divinity*, 199 et passim. Some critics, including Hinnant, however, see its form as one of the reasons for its fall from favor. Hinnant, 215–16. There are a number of readings of the relationship between form and content, some quite ingenious; see Mallinson, "Anne Finch," 56, which reads the poem as ironic and as an eighteenth-century "mock" form.

101. Sprat, "Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. Abraham Cowley," unpaginated. On Cowley's appeal to women, see King, "Cowley among the Women," 43–63.

102. Trotter, *Poetry of Abraham Cowley*, 117.

103. Abraham Cowley, "The Preface of the Author," in Cowley, *Works*.

104. Cohen, *Unfolding of the Seasons*, 326–29; Trotter, *Poetry of Abraham Cowley*, 141–42.

105. Congreve, *Pindarique Ode*, unpaginated.

106. Cowley, "Preface of the Author."

107. Hacker, "A Few Cranky Paragraphs," 195.

108. The quotations are from Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue*, 333 and 334. Weinbrot does not mention Finch in his book.

THREE: Women and Poetry in the Public Eye

Epigraph: Jane Brereton, *Decorum: or the Female Debate*, 205.

1. McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 117–19.

2. Claudia N. Thomas, " 'Th' Instructive Moral,' " 168n17.

3. Medoff, "New Light on Sarah Fyge," 169; Ezell, xxvii.

4. Hughes, "Elizabeth Rowe and the Countess of Hertford," 731.

5. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *Poetical Beauties*, 6–7.

6. Claudia Thomas Kairoff has shared her conference papers on *Anne Boleyn to King Henry VIII*, "Elizabeth Tollet's Female 'Saints' " and " 'Except My Lord Herbert': Elizabeth Tollet's Source for *Anne Boleyn to King Henry VIII*"; she gives Tollet's sources as manuscripts in the Cotton Library, Lord Herbert of Cherbury's account of Henry's VIII's life (*The Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth*, 1649), and some contemporary publications. Sherard was apprenticed to the curator of the botanical gardens at Chelsea and became a distinguished apothecary and botanist. By the 1720s he had one of the finest gardens in England, with many rare plants. *DNB*, s.v. "Sherard."

7. Blanford Parker, *Triumph of Augustan Poetics*, 7.

8. Dobrée, *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century*, 121, 123.

9. Peake, "Poetry, 1700–1740," 138–59.

10. Rothstein, *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, 49. These characterizations go on and on; Mark Noll cites the "artificiality, the aloofness, the autocracy of diction, which dominates eighteenth-century English poetry." Quoted in Marshall and Todd, *English Congregational Hymns*, 7–8.

11. Sitter, "Introduction," 8–9.

12. John Sitter, "Questions in Poetics: Why and How Poetry Matters" in *Cambridge Companion*, 133–56, quotation from 133.

13. Hacker, "A Few Cranky Paragraphs," 194. Hacker has published eight books of poetry and won the Lambda Literary Award, the Lenore Marshall Prize of the Academy of American Poets, and the Poets' Prize.

14. DuPlessis, "Otherhow (and Permission to Continue)," 329.

15. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, 535.

16. This conclusion was reached by charting the poems, by title and author, in the major collections of the eighteenth century. Among them were the Dodsley collections of 1737, 1755, 1758, and 1773; the Colman-Thornton collections of 1755, 1773, and [1780]; and the Dyce of 1825. See the bibliography for full citations. Although the topical nature of her poems contributed to reader interest, the fact that Dodsley owned the copyright to her poems was a major determinant. See Solomon, *Rise of Robert Dodsley*, 111–17. Sylvia Myers notes that for some women Lady Mary displayed "a defect of delicacy and of sentiment" that kept her from being a useful model for them. *Bluestocking Circle*, 154–55.

17. Publication information is from Grundy, Introduction, 172–74.

18. Ibid., 171. This introduction to the poems is signed by Grundy, and see the discussion of Lady Mary's contemporary reputation in the introduction to the essays, which is signed by Robert Halsband, H&G, 3–5.

19. Elizabeth Tollet, *On a Poem of the Right Honourable Lady M.W.M. in Mr. Hammond's Miscellany*, in Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1724), 56. Hammond published the poem as *Constantinople*.

20. On their publication and authorship, see Messenger, *His and Hers*, 85–86; Grundy,

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 108–9; Grundy, "Preface to the Paperback Reprint," x–xii; and Grundy, Introduction, 172–73. Messenger analyzes closely the two versions of *Friday* and discusses Montagu's other eclogues, 86–107; my interpretations of the eclogues have been influenced by this chapter.

21. On the form, see Forsgren, *John Gay*, 2:135–39, 193–205.

22. Doody, *Daring Muse*, 108, referring specifically to the Virgilian eclogue.

23. Ann Murry, *The Tête à Tête*, in Murry, *Poems on Various Subjects*, 119–28, quotation from 128.

24. Isobel Grundy has discussed in detail Lady Mary's Ovidian poetry, beginning with her juvenilia. See esp. Grundy's "Entire Works of Clarinda," 93–94, 97–100, and her "Ovid and Eighteenth-Century Divorce."

25. Doody, *Daring Muse*, 87, and see 87–89.

26. See Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, 225–30.

27. Grundy describes in detail the courtship, reservations, and on-and-off discussions about marriage between Lady Mary and Edward Wortley Montagu before their elopement; Lady Mary was certainly not overcome by "sighs." Ibid., 28–58. Grundy summarizes the Yonge legal history in "Ovid and Eighteenth-Century Divorce."

28. Backscheider, " 'Endless Aversion Rooted in the Soul,' " 113. This essay also describes in detail the humiliations of the proceedings, including the fact that the Lords voted on whether to allow the woman to sit during testimony. The husband, as a Lord, could question the wife, but she could not question him.

29. Quoted in Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World*, 133.

30. In a letter quoted by Grundy, Lady Mary says of her family, "They know no happynesse but Equipage and furniture," and many of her suspicions about motives for marriage are along this line. Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, 51.

31. Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World*, 131. On the intertextuality of these poems, see Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and His Eighteenth-Century Women Readers*, 125–30.

32. Donna Landry points out that Pope "strips her of her aristocratic taste and metropolitan sophistication and portrays her as . . . the backward hunting gentry." "Alexander Pope, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu," 308. Landry and I agree on many points, including Montagu's ability to "ventriloquize" Pope's mannerisms and pretensions, 321; I discovered her fine article after I had completed this chapter. Laurence Lerner represents a familiar opinion by arguing that Montagu's attacks on Pope are examples of "the rage but not the talent to abuse." "Subverting the Canon," 355–58.

33. Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, 43–44. Rumbold points out that Pope's responses to Lady Mary were violent and long lasting, and she catalogs his many references to her in *Women's Place in Pope's World*, 131, 156–58.

34. Grundy, "Ovid and Eighteenth-Century Divorce," 421.

35. Lerner, "Subverting the Canon," 357.

36. H&G, 219. Here and elsewhere Grundy argues that Lady Mary wrote this ballad, and it is easy to see it as a bawdy extension of the attitudes and interpretation in the *Epistle*.

37. Mary Barber, *The Conclusion of a Letter to the Rev. Mr. C——*, in Barber, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 59, 62.

38. On Montagu and Hands, see Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, 205–8; this poem is quoted on 207.

39. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *A Receipt to Cure the Vapours. Written to Lady J——n*, in Montagu, *Poetical Works of the Right Honourable Lady M——y W——y M——e*, 97–99.

40. Pope's poem suggests "a tight, neat girl" as a satisfactory solution to sexual longing and congratulates Bathurst for finding "willing Nymphs" adequate.

41. See Kenny, "Court Eclogs."

42. On her juvenile poems, see Grundy, "Entire Works of Clarinda."

43. Nancy K. Miller, "Emphasis Added," 357.

44. This is an adaptation of Greer, *Slip-shod Sibyls*, 247.

45. Quoted in Greer et al., *Kissing the Rod*, 346.

46. Sarah Fyge Egerton, *To One who said I must not Love*, in Egerton, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 42.

47. For details of her life, see Medoff, "New Light on Sarah Fyge," 155–75.

48. Ibid., 171–72; it appears that Manley visited Egerton in Adstock in 1704. The Egertons' stormy marriage included separation proceedings and sensational accounts of their lives in such places as Manley's *New Atalantis.*

49. Sarah Fyge Egerton, *The Liberty*, in Egerton, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 19.

50. Egerton, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 108.

51. Mary Leapor, *Man the Monarch*, in Leapor, *Poems upon Several Occasions* (1751), 7–10; vol. 1 had been published in 1748.

52. Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, 32.

53. Hacker, "A Few Cranky Paragraphs," 195.

54. Immediately before and during Queen Anne's reign, Egerton and Chudleigh pioneered the stance of drawing additional freedom to write and select topics from their loyalty to Anne, and Queen Caroline inspired even more poetry. Both Medoff and Carol Barash see Egerton's poetry following a rough autobiographical path and Queen Anne fulfilling an increasingly enabling role. Barash argues that *To the Queen*, for instance, "rescues" Egerton from the doubts about herself as a writer expressed in *Satyr against the Muses. English Women's Poetry*, 248.

55. I am expanding on Pamela Plimpton's idea in " 'Inconstant Constancy,' " 12.

56. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *On a Lady's Writing*, in Barbauld, *Poems*, 52.

57. Quoted from an anonymous review in the *Ladies Monthly Museum* in Plimpton, " 'Inconstant Constancy,' " 259.

58. Mary Jones, *After the Small Pox*, in Jones, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, 79–80. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from her poems are from this edition.

59. Elizabeth Hands, *A Poem, on the Supposition. . . ,* in Hands, *Death of Amnon* (1789), 47. The vaguely French names suggest that Hands was aware of fine gradations in rank.

60. Reynolds, 44. I have extended the macron doubling the *m* in *common.* For detailed discussions of this poem, see Hinnant, 31, 82–98; and Messenger, *Gender at Work*, 51–52.

61. Hall, "Signification, Representation, Ideology," 108.

62. Sarah Dixon, *To the Muse*, in Dixon, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 121–25. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Dixon's poems are from this edition.

63. Mary Darwall, *Elegy on the Uses of Poetry*, in Whateley, *Original Poems on Several Occasions*, 109–13.

64. Bogan, "Heart and the Lyre," 339–40, 341.

65. Mary Jones, *Miscellanies in Prose and Poetry*, 36, 16, 114.

66. See Messenger, "Selected Nightingales," in *His and Hers*, esp. 76–83. Messenger points out that Finch "refreshed the tradition by bending it." Typical poems on nightingales are Savage's classical ode *To the Nightingale* and Charlotte Smith's Sonnet III, which concludes, "Ah! songstress sad! that such my lot might be, / To sigh, and sing at liberty—like thee!"

67. This poem is "written by Julia" in Helen Maria Williams's *Julia: A Novel*, 1:15.

68. Judith Cowper Madan, *The Progress of Poetry*, (1731), 131. Significant revisions in the 1783 version published by Dodsley include reorganization, cuts, and changed allusions. For example, verses on Congreve and John Hughes, the author of *An Ode to the Creator of the World*, have been omitted. She also changes the order of the fathers of the ode, reversing the order of Horace to Pindar and ending with Horace in 1783. This revision is recognition of the shifting reputations of these poets and the kinds of odes they wrote. This section on Madan has benefited from the work of Melissa Roth.

69. Jane Brereton, *To the Author of the Progress of Poetry*, 88–89.

70. Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths*, 155–57, quotation from 157.

71. Jane Brereton, *The Dream*, 135–67, quotation from 167.

72. In contrast to Finch, who today is represented as contesting Pope in person and in verse several times, Madan is usually interpreted as inhibited by his attention. See, for example, Rumbold, "Poetic Career of Judith Cowper," 49, 51–65. This section on Madan has benefited from the work of my research assistant Melissa Roth.

73. Ibid., 60–61.

74. Ibid., 50.

75. Jane Brereton, *Epistle to Mrs. Anne Griffiths. Written from London, in 1718*, 32–33.

76. Madan, *Progress of Poetry* (1731), 130, 140.

77. Judith Madan, *Progress of Poetry* (1783), 24.

78. Quoted in Moira Ferguson, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, 101.

79. Hansen, "Pious Mrs. Rowe," 41.

80. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *Philomela*, xvii.

81. Henry Grove and Theophilus Rowe, "The Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe," in Rowe, *Misc. Works*, 1:li.

82. Ibid., 1:liv.

83. For instance, in *To the Memory of Thomas Rowe* "Tyes" becomes "ties," and "Extasy" becomes "ecstasy."

84. Stecher, *Elizabeth Rowe*, 230–38. I am grateful to Kathryn King and my research assistant Elizabeth Childs for advice on editions of Rowe's poetry.

85. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, 105–6.

86. The nature of her relationships with the two men is impossible to determine. See Marshall, 13, 32, 90, 10n7, 36n1, and 96n1, which characterizes the relationships as complex and largely denies romantic attachments; Wright, "Matthew Prior and Elizabeth Singer"; and King, "Elizabeth Singer Rowe's Tactical Use of Print and Manuscript." Dunton describes his six-day courtship visit to Singer's home in Agford in 1697 in "The Double Courtship," in Dunton, *Athenianism* (1710). In the manuscript of a speech, King quotes part of Dunton's description of Rowe, which included speculation that she had beautiful legs. I am indebted to the work of Marshall, Wright, and King in this section and thank King for sharing her manuscripts.

87. Wright, "Matthew Prior and Elizabeth Singer," 72.

88. Mary Masters, *Written in a blank Leaf of Mrs. Row's Works*, in Masters, *Familiar Letters*, 244.

89. Elizabeth Carter, *On the Death of Mrs. Rowe*, in Carter, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1766), 10–11. This poem and others are collected in Rowe, *Misc. Works*, 1:cviii–cxxviii.

90. Her poems are, in fact, rarely anthologized. Even Fairer and Gerrard's exemplary *Eighteenth-Century Poetry* omits her.

91. Madeleine Forell Marshall points out the Miltonic influence in "Elizabeth Singer Rowe," *DLB*, 95:254.

92. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *Hymn I*, in Rowe, *Misc. Works*, 1:29–31.

93. Although various critics have stated otherwise, only the number dated 18 July 1695 can definitely be identified as entirely composed of her work. Melissa Roth rechecked the entire *Athenian Mercury*.

94. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *To One that Persuades Me*, in Rowe, *Poems*, 2:6. This poem is in the 1696 edition only. The pagination begins over after page 72, although 72 and the new page 1 are on facing pages. I have indicated page numbers as if the two paginations were volumes.

95. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *Platonick Love*, in Rowe, *Poems*, 1:1.

96. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *Lady Jane Gray, to Lord Guilford Dudley*, in Rowe, *Letters on Various Occasions*, 130.

97. This popular prose work by Rowe was first published in 1728 as *Friendship in Death. In Twenty Letters from the Dead to the Living*.

98. Edmund Curll had published it in the section of his edition titled "Poems Sacred to Love and Friendship"; in fact, it followed *The Vision to Theron* and was simply called *Another*. There are more substantive differences between the two *Vision*s than between most of the others. For example, *Nor with such pleasing Sleep, such soothing Rest* becomes in Grove and Rowe's volumes *Nor with such grateful sleep*, and the word *Celestial* in *And teach Thee all our most Celestial Lays* becomes *celebrated*. In the Curll version, "The Vision" "darts like Light'ning" through the "op'ning Skies," which is a better image than "thro' the cleaving skies." These poems are on pp. 149–51 of *Philomela* and 1–3 of the *Misc. Works*, respectively.

FOUR: Hymns, Narratives, and Innovations in Religious Poetry

Epigraph: Jane Cavendish, quoted in Wilcox, " 'My hart is full,' " 20.

1. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *express* as "the action of representing signs or actions," "definitely formulated, explicit, unmistakable"; many of the illustrative examples are about expressions of religion.

2. Blanford Parker, *Triumph of Augustan Poetics*, 10.

3. Greer, *Slip-shod Sibyls*, 44, 56.

4. Dobrée, *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century*, 153–58; Morris, "Poetry of Absence," 231. An exception to the neglect of religious writing is King, *Jane Barker, Exile*.

5. Doody, *Daring Muse*, 139.

6. Sitter, "Introduction," 7–8.

7. Messenger, *Pastoral Tradition*, 116. David Morris says that subject and treatment identify religious poetry and can be used to classify kinds of sublime religious poetry. *Religious Sublime*, 104.

8. Elizabeth Carter, *On the Death of Mrs. Rowe*, in Rowe, *Misc. Works*, l:cxi.

9. Elaine Hobby identifies three women who published such books and argues that the "ideal female author" appears in these texts. *Virtue of Necessity*, 54–55, 59, and 63. Helen Wilcox identifies more in " 'My hart is full.' " The idea that writing religious verse is enabling is common; Harriet Guest writes that "religion makes available to women a sense of social duty that overrides the modesty appropriate to femininity." *Small Change*, 146.

Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke (1561–1621), and Anne Vaughan Lock (c. 1530–after 1590) are increasingly being recognized as important, original poets and part of a tradition.

10. Collected by Nahum Tate. Finch's poems were *On Easter-Day* (an ode), *A Preparation to Prayer*, *Gold is Try'd in the Fire*, *On Affliction*, and paraphrases of Psalm 137 and the Song of Solomon, chap. 2. McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 71.

11. Hinnant says that what separates Finch's devotional and nondevotional poetry "is more a matter of subject than of perspective" or method; he also points out that she wrote both kinds of verse throughout her life, see Hinnant, 226–58. His chapter on this poetry is largely devoted to one of "two polarized groups," that which "moralizes" topics "on this side of the grave." I do not find her poetry as "featureless" as he and the critics he quotes do.

12. This is not to say that men did not express the same freedom in their hymns. Watts's *The Adventurous Muse*, for instance, asks, "Give me the Chariot whose diviner Wheels / Mark their own Rout, and unconfin'd / Bound o'er the everlasting Hills." Watts, *Horae Lyricae*, 210–13.

13. Morris reminds us that Samuel Johnson defined *paraphrase* as "to translate loosely." *Religious Sublime*, 109. For his discussion of the paraphrase, see 104–14; he discusses no women poets. More usefully Hannibal Hamlin reminds us that the root of *translation* is the Latin *translatio*, the " 'carrying across' of a text from one language and culture to another." *Psalm Culture*, 147.

14. Poets of the period seldom knew Hebrew, and a number of translations of the Bible were current. Miles Coverdale's *Psalms from the Great Bible* (1539) were in the Book of Common Prayer. Dissenters, however, seemed to prefer the King James Version. On translations and the Psalms, see Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 56–57.

15. Canticle 5.6 was in the 18 June 1695 number, and 7.11 in the number dated 7 January 1696.

16. Wilcox, " 'My hart is full,' " 31–32.

17. Meek, "Introduction," 5:98.

18. Madeleine Forell Marshall, "Elizabeth Singer Rowe," *DLB*, 95:250.

19. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *Paraphrase on Canticle 5,6, etc.*, in Rowe, *Poems*, 2:13.

20. Also somewhat available to Rowe's contemporaries were the Coverdale (1535); the Bishop's Bible (Coverdale's revision of the Thomas Matthew Bible, published in 1539); and the Bible popular with the common people, the Geneva (1557), which "was the Bible of Shakespeare and Bunyan, of the pilgrims . . . and of Oliver Cromwell and his army." *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, s.v. "Translations." Nonconformists like Rowe would also have read interpretations in Matthew Poole's *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*. Hamlin argues that many translations of the Psalms were "marked as 'literary.' " *Psalm Culture*, 120, 144.

21. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *Psalm XXIII*, in Rowe, *Misc. Works*, 1:74–75.

22. Davie, *Eighteenth-Century Hymn*, 20.

23. Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 147; see also his chapter on Renaissance pastoral and Psalm 23, 147–72.

24. Sternhold and Hopkins, *Whole Book of Psalms*, 17. The Psalms are printed with the caesura to signal common meter.

25. Tate and Brady, *New Version of the Psalms of David*, 43.

26. Richardson, *Pamela*, 140–42, 301. All quotations are from the 2001 edition.

27. This episode has been variously interpreted. For instance, Michael Austin argues that the second reading "shifts the typological significance and, with it, the reader's understanding of the Lincolnshire captivity." "Lincolnshire Babylon," quotation from 514. Austin summarizes much of the previous criticism on this point. Applying Hamlin's chapter on Psalm 137 would enhance my reading; his book appeared while mine was in production. *Psalm Culture*, 218–52.

28. Harrison, *Songs in the Night*, 105 and 149–50, respectively.

29. Cohen, "Return to the Ode," 218–19.

30. Elizabeth Tollet, *My Own Epitaph*, in Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1755), 41.

31. Madeleine Forell Marshall discusses divine love conventions at some length in *The Poetry of Elizabeth Singer Rowe;* see esp. 20–24. Wilcox identifies "the masculine Davidic voice" and other poets such as Cowley, Andrew Marvell, and especially George Herbert as influences in "My hart is full," 26–28.

32. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *Letters on Various Occasions*, 123. In fact, the similarities to Crashaw's poem are largely structural. See *To the Name Above Every Name, The Name of Jesus, A Hymn*, in Crashaw, *Complete Poems of Richard Crashaw*, 31–37.

33. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *The Wish*, in Rowe, *Misc. Works*, 1:141. This poem is quite different from a poem by the same title published in Rowe, *Poems*, 2:1.

34. See Marilyn L. Williamson, *Raising Their Voices*, 111–12.

35. Bond, *Spectator*, 3:514 (14 June 1712). For a good discussion of Addison's opinions about hymns and their language, see Morris, *Religious Sublime*, 131–38.

36. For the history of the acceptance of congregational singing, see Benson, *English Hymn*, esp. the first six chapters. After 1664 each denomination must be considered separately in mapping its acceptance.

37. Watson, *English Hymn*, 1.

38. Morris, *Religious Sublime*, 105.

39. Marshall and Todd, *English Congregational Hymns*, 1.

40. Morris, *Religious Sublime*, 135.

41. For lists, see Benson, *English Hymn*, 28–37.

42. On the history of the definition of *hymn*, see Davie, *Eighteenth-Century Hymn*, 16–20.

43. See Watson, *English Hymn*, 32–36. Common meter alternates eight and six syllables in quatrains that usually rhyme *abab* or *abcb;* in short meter the quatrains are six, six, eight, and six syllables; in long meter there are eight syllables to a line rhyming *aabb* or *abab*. Proper, or peculiar, meter, which is not mentioned in most modern sources, indicates a meter built into a particular hymn by its author or adapter; it is different from common, long, and short meter. In many proper meters there are ten syllables to a line, and many are in heroic couplets. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as "metre used only in a particular hymn, or at least not identical with any of the metres having recognized names."

44. Watson, *English Hymn*, 18. Benson traces the division of opinions to Luther and Calvin and calls the hymns and metrical psalms "opposing systems" and notes that the latter dominated firmly in England and Scotland for two hundred years. Benson, *English Hymn*, 24, 26.

45. Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue*, 410. He is quoting Restoration and eighteenth-century critics and poets, such as Aaron Hill and Richard Steele. See also Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 86–87, 109–10.

46. Quoted in Cohen, "Return to the Ode," 207.

47. Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue*, 455.

48. Quoted in ibid., 412. I have used Weinbrot's discussion on 405–80 throughout this section.

49. Manners, *Review of Poetry*, 28–29.

50. Quoted in Benson, *English Hymn*, 49–50.

51. Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue*, 425–26.

52. On Watts, the ode form, and his "daring use of rhythm and metre," see Watson, *English Hymn*, 146–48.

53. Sarah Fyge Egerton, *The Extasy*, in Egerton, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 2.

54. Watson, *English Hymn*, 27–29.

55. Egerton, *The Extasy*, 7.

56. Quoted in Marshall and Todd, *English Congregational Hymns*, 15.

57. See Benson, *English Hymn*, 66–67.

58. Ibid., 111, 206–10, quotation from 206.

59. Quoted in Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 190.

60. Quoted in Watson, *English Hymn*, 4.

61. Scodel, "Lyric Forms," 120. I obviously would qualify his statements about the hymn on 136.

62. Watson, *English Hymn*, 75, 5.

63. King, *Jane Barker, Exile*, 20–21.

64. Messenger, *Pastoral Tradition*, 120 et passim. Messenger also discussed the gendering of addresses to God with me before her untimely death.

65. Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, 54–55; Guest, *Small Change*, 146.

66. King's work with Barker's religion offers a model, and she is quoting Paula McDowell, a colleague of hers in an NEH Summer Seminar, whose work is equally revisionary along these lines, in *Jane Barker, Exile*, 132. King quotes the lines "So now, great God . . . ," below, from *A Pindaric Poem on Habakkuk*, 132–33.

67. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *Hymn. "Ye are the salt of the earth,"* in M&K, 128.

68. Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 130.

69. See ibid., esp. chap. 4.

70. Rogal, *Sisters of Sacred Song*, s.v. "Masters."

71. Harrison, *Songs in the Night*, 63–64.

72. For this information I am grateful to my research assistant Jessica Ellis and to two librarians, Liza Weisbrod at Auburn University and Mary Louise Vandyke at Oberlin, as well as to Rogal, *Sisters of Sacred Song*, s.v. "Harrison."

73. Although Reuben Brower does not use Finch's hymns, he argues that she is "nearer to Donne than to the Romantics" and points out that the "seriousness is the seriousness of a religious and philosophical idea which is experienced, not merely entertained." "Lady Winchilsea and the Poetic Tradition," 69; he is using *The Spleen* as his example.

74. Mary Barber, *To Dr. Richard Helsham*, in Barber, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 30–31.

75. Marshall and Todd, *English Congregational Hymns*, 28–32.

76. Rogal, *Sisters of Sacred Song*, 68–69 and 9.

77. Marshall and Todd, *English Congregational Hymns*, 2.

78. Both Margaret Doody and J. Paul Hunter have argued the flexible, brilliant use of the couplet in the century. See Doody, *Daring Muse;* and Hunter, "Form as Meaning," esp. 161–62n4.

79. Quoted in Rippy, *Matthew Prior*, 90.

80. Critics continue to repeat the commonplace that *Friendship in Death* is "a work of unassailable piety." See King, "Elizabeth Singer Rowe's Tactical Use of Print and Manuscript"; and Todd, s.v. "Rowe." Marlene Hansen says that *Friendship* shows Rowe to be interested in "a different species of reality" (a memorable description) than novelists are and "impatient to be reunited" with her father and husband. "Pious Mrs. Rowe," 34. For tales that use amatory fiction plots and conventions, see those printed in Backscheider and Richetti, *Popular Fiction by Women*, 324–34. Rowe's knowledge of contemporary fiction and her use of its conventions can also be seen in her letters. See, for example, her account of the impression Lady Hertford made on her waiting women, quoted in Hughes, "Elizabeth Rowe and the Countess of Hertford," 731.

81. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *The History of Joseph*, in Marshall, 289. All quotations are from this edition.

82. Bruce Murphy, ed., *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), s.v. "Mithras."

83. For precedents of turning the secular into the sacred, including Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, and an extended treatment of Rowe's example, see David, "Story of Semiramis," 97–99.

84. For an excellent study of the Semiramis account, see ibid., 91–101.

85. One might also compare the telling of Joseph's embattled chastity and helpless position to the same story in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*.

86. Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 197.

87. Ibid., 281. Keeble does not mention Rowe.

88. The Song of the Three Holy Children is one of the books of an addition in the Greek version of the book of Daniel between verses 23 and 24 of chapter 3. The Apochrypha as defined by Jerome were the books outside the Hebrew canon.

89. Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1755), 109–16.

90. Mary Leapor, *The Tale of Cuchi*, in Leapor, *Poems upon Several Occasions* (1751), 244–45.

91. Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 103–4. I am indebted to this chapter in Trible's book, 93–116. Yearsley's *On Jepthah's Vow* is in *Poems on Various Subjects*, 132–39.

92. Landry, "Traffic in Women Poets," 189. My discussion of Yearsley's poem has benefited from Landry's discussion of it in *Muses of Resistance*, 158–62.

93. See Valbuena, *Subject to the King's Divorce*, 113–51.

94. Mary Jones, *The Story of Jacob and Rachel attempted*, 123–24.

95. Ibid., 132.

96. This poem has recently been printed in McLennan, *Nature's Ban*, 30–56.

97. Hands, *The Death of Amnon* (1996), 1–43, quotation from 1.

98. Franklin, Introduction, *The Death of Amnon*, 1:vii; see also ix–x.

99. I read the relationship between Absalom and his servants quite differently from the way Donna Landry does, but see her useful interpretation in *Muses of Resistance*, 38–42.

100. This addition to the book of Daniel may have been excluded because no right of cross-examination existed. Tollet's poem is *Susanna: Or Innocence Preserv'd*, in Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1755), 156–69.

101. Reynolds, 230. Like much of the Royalist verse, this poem reminds the reader that "Th' All-giving Hand of Heav'n" lifted David above his brothers and crowned him — and controls his destiny on earth and in heaven.

102. Lewis, *English Fable*, 148–49.

103. Women poets today continue these practices. Alicia Ostriker converts the story of Sarah thusly: "A proud old woman, her face desert-bitten / Has named her son: laughter / Laughter for bodily pleasure, laughter for old age triumph." *A Meditation in Seven Days*, quoted in Ostriker, "Entering the Tents," 265; see also *Sarah's Choice*, by Eleanor Wilner, with the memorable line, "You can be chosen / or you can choose. Not both," 324–26. Akasha Hull writes of Lucille Clifton's similar uses of religious stories in "In Her Own Images," in the same collection.

104. See Mermin, "Women Becoming Poets," 351. Mermin quotes Killigrew's poem.

105. Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue*, 406.

106. Messenger is one of the few critics to discuss pastoral conventions in women's religious verse; see her *Pastoral Tradition*, 115–33.

107. Ann Yearsley, *On Jephthah's Vow, Taken in a Literal Sense*, in Yearsley, *Poems on Various Subjects*, 137; the poem is on 131–38.

108. Messenger notes the controversy over whether a religious poem can be a pastoral. *Pastoral Tradition*, 115–16; chap. 7 is on religious pastoral poetry. See also Fairchild, *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, vol. 1; and Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 143–44 et passim.

109. Rowe, always a student of poetry, wrote *An imitation of a Pastoral of Mrs. Killegrew's.* See Rowe, *Misc. Works*, 1:16–18. Messenger surveys an impressive number of religious pastoral verse by women in *Pastoral Tradition;* see esp. 122–33.

110. Elizabeth Singer Rowe's poem was first published in *A Collection of Divine Hymns and Poems on Several Occasions*, 35–42. Quotations in my discussion are from Marshall.

111. The second poem in Rowe's *Miscellaneous Works* is her translation of the beginning of the fourth book of Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered.* The pastoral mode had become the rage with the publication of Ambrose Philips's *Pastorals* in 1708 and Pope's pastorals in Tonson's *Miscellanies* in 1709. They too were influenced by Tasso. Paul Alpers says that today Tasso is known "only to specialists in their respective national literatures." *What Is Pastoral?* x; see also *Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed., s.v. "Tasso."

112. Reynolds, 215–20. Cf. Harrison's quite different but very musical *Unto us a Child is Born* in *Songs in the Night*, which begins, "To us, to us a Child is born, / Arise and hail the glorious Morn: / Come, let us praise the God of Heav'n, / To us, to us a Son is giv'n!" (7–8).

113. Marshall, 151. Messenger points out that each shepherd is individualized, with Uranio being the wisest. *Pastoral Tradition*, 121.

114. Tasso's play *Aminta* (1573) was very popular in England; many characters in pastoral poetry were given the name Aminta. Giovanni Battista Guardini was the author of *Il Pastor Fido* (1583). Finch also draws upon *Aminta.*

115. Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1755), 22, 23. Cf. Watts's *When I survey the wondrous cross*, which includes a verse seldom printed today: "His dying Crimson like a Robe / Spreads o're his Body on the Tree."

116. Messenger also discusses the poem as taking up the controversy over the compatibility of pastoral and Christianity. *Pastoral Tradition*, 118–20.

117. See Toliver, *Pastoral*, 16; Toliver does not mention Finch in his book.

118. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *Devout Exercises*, xxvii–xxviii.

119. Watts finds himself deficient in "Elevation of Spirit" and "Divine Affection and Zeal." Ibid., xxiii–xxiv.

120. Madeleine Forell Marshall, "Part One: Critical Essay," in Marshall, 66.

121. Madeleine Forell Marshall, "Elizabeth Singer Rowe," *DLB*, 95:254.

122. The first twenty-two of the soliloquies are in heroic couplets, and the next forty-two in blank verse. Each set is numbered sequentially, beginning with number 1. There is a soliloquy in *Miscellanea Sacra*, but I have not identified the author.

123. Wilcox, "My hart is full," 28.

124. Kippis et al., *Collection of Hymns and Psalms.*

125. Barker, "Poetry from the Provinces," 245–50.

126. Also printed in this volume are her Melissa poems and *To the Gentleman who offer'd 50 Pounds to any Person, who should write the best Poem by May next on five Subjects, viz. Life, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell; by a Lady who sign'd Fidelia.* Fidelia turned out to be one of Brereton's neighbors.

FIVE: Friendship Poems

Epigraph: Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *To Mrs. P[riestley], with some Drawings of Birds and Insects*, in M&K, 6.

1. Bernikow, *World Split Open*, 11.

2. Mermin, "Women Becoming Poets," 347.

3. Grundy, "Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Her Daughter," 197.

4. Ibid., 198.

5. In a recent essay, Margaret Ezell writes of her wish that "some new source" of "serendipitously preserved artifacts" about lives and writing would be found. "Posthumous Publication of Women's Manuscripts," 121.

6. See Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, 1. Shannon's historical introduction to the subject and discussion of Renaissance "homonormative" culture provides valuable background, 1–53.

7. Fenves, "Politics of Friendship," 133. Fenves's essay is on the Kant-Constant debate.

8. Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, 22.

9. A number of critics have identified what Philips took from *précieux* art and how she differed from it. See Swaim, "Matching the 'Matchless Orinda' to Her Times," 104–7; Wahl, *Invisible Relations*, 130–70, esp. 154–57; and Andreadis, *Sappho in Early Modern England*, 57–62.

10. Katherine Philips, *A Friend*, in Philips, 95. The introduction and facsimile of her *Poems (1667) by Katherine Philips* are numbered separately, both beginning with 1. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Philips's poems are from this edition.

11. Elizabeth Carter, *To* ——, in Carter, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1746), 17.

12. Reprinted in Saintsbury, *Minor Poets of the Caroline Period*, 1:503.

13. It is now generally known that Philips's editor, Charles Cotterell, rearranged her poetry, following neither the order in her manuscript or that in the 1664 edition. See Moody, "Orinda, Rosania, Lucasia"; Barash, *English Women's Poetry*, 81–99; and Wahl, *Invisible Relations*, 131, 147, 159, 163–69.

14. See Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics*, 74–81; Andreadis, "Sapphic-Platonics of Katherine Philips," 34–36; and Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, 128–35. Ellen Moody states correctly that the first editor of Philips's work, Charles Cotterell, "presents us with an utterly conventional, a socially impeccable, fervently pro-Stuart Orinda" and "the cream of society and the arts honoring and honored by a female poet who is a paragon of womanhood." "Orinda, Rosania, Lucasia," 328. Wahl's chapter on Philips carefully traces how critics have interpreted sexuality in her poetry and concludes with a refined con-

textualization of her poetry, with careful attention to the order of the poems in Philips's manuscript. *Invisible Relations*, 130–70.

15. Quoted in Lund, "*Bibliotecha* and the British Dames," 98–99. See also Loscocco, "Manly Sweetness."

16. *To Mrs. Mary Awbrey* is a concise statement of the ideal Platonic friendship. Philips, 70–71. See also *A Dialogue with Absence*, 25–26; *Parting with Lucasia. A Song*, 65–66; and *To my Excellent Lucasia, on our Friendship*, 51–52, which includes the typical line, "When I could say without a crime, / I am not thine, but Thee," 51.

17. Barbara McGovern discusses Finch's use of the name Ardelia and makes the same connection that I do in *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 121–13, 138, and 141–43; she also documents Finch's "admiration" for Philips's poetry, on 123. McGovern argues that Finch signs "Ardelia" to "her most personal poems or in those with possibly inflammatory political or social implications that she withheld from publication" and that "Ardelia" is "to be closely identified with the real-life poet," 138 et passim.

18. In August 1792, after a series of acts beginning in 1789 stripped the Catholic Church of rights and property, the convents, which had been "havens of retreat for priests and laymen" were all closed and the nuns dispersed. The nuns had been much more resistant than the monks to disbanding, and several communities of them tried to re-establish themselves in ruined or deserted convents. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, s.v. "French Revolution"; McManners, *French Revolution and the Church*, 32–33, 129.

19. Susanna Blamire, *The Nun's Return* in *Susanna Blamire: The Poetical Works*, 77–82. This poem is dated 1790.

20. In spite of being married to a Parliamentarian, Philips consistently expressed her royalist loyalties. See, for example, *Upon the double murther of K. Charles I*, in Philips, 1–2.

21. Quoted in McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 113; see also her chapter "Female Friendships and Women Writers."

22. Mary Jones, *On her attending Miss Charlot Clayton*, 116.

23. Mary Masters, *My Love describ'd*, in Masters, *Familiar Letters*, 139–40.

24. Jones, *On her attending Miss Charlot Clayton*, 115.

25. Elizabeth Carter, *To [Miss Lynch]*, in Carter, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1776), 12–15. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Carter's poems are from this edition. Identifications of addressees are from Carter, *Memoirs*.

26. Elizabeth Carter, *To the Same*, 16.

27. Mary Savage, *On Friendship*, 2:64–65.

28. Wahl, *Invisible Relations*, 133, 147.

29. Margaret Doody points out how frequently women invoke "duty" when they discuss marriage. "Love in All its Oddness," 495.

30. Lanser, "Befriending the Body." See also Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature;* and Rizzo, *Companions without Vows*, esp. chaps. 11 and 12. Janet Todd reminds us, for example, how threatening the friendship of Anna Howe and Clarissa is and that Anna's hostility to marriage and distrust of men were exactly the kinds of things men feared. *Sign of Angellica*, cf. 52. For telling examples, see Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 71–73, 118, 139. An exception to the poems by women defending their friendships is Clara Reeve's *To My Friend Mrs.* ——, which praises Philips, Carter, and Lennox but says that women and men are not equal, 4–11.

31. Messenger, *Pastoral Tradition*, 74.

32. Betty Rizzo notes that Agmondesham Vesey is torn between relief that his wife

is occupied and cared for by her friend and companion and discomforted that "they would . . . discuss him together and pry." *Companions without Vows*, 218.

33. Quoted in Pitcher, "Mary Whateley Darwall's Poem," 471.

34. *The Correspondents*, 27–30.

35. Mary Masters, *On Friendship*, in Masters, *Familiar Letters*, 123. Masters is reworking Philips's line, "'Tis Love refin'd and purg'd from all its dross," from *A Friend*, in Philips, 94.

36. West, *Letters to a Young Lady*, 2:366–67.

37. On this subject, see Ty, *Empowering the Feminine*, 94–97.

38. Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 528.

39. Elizabeth Hands was a close reader of Elizabeth Rowe, and Rowe wrote a poem with the same title.

40. Hands, *Death of Amnon* (1996), 66, 68.

41. Mary Robinson, *To Aurelia*, in Robinson, *Poems by Mrs. Robinson* (1775), 98–99.

42. Ann Murry, *To Miss J. West*, in Murry, *Poems on Various Subjects*, 69.

43. Jane Brereton, *To a Lady. On her Marriage*, 109.

44. Mary Savage, *Letter to Miss E.B.*, 2:4–12.

45. Mary Jones, *Matrimony*, 49.

46. I realize that *lesbian* is anachronistic, and its reference here is to labels applied without evidence or historicizing. I do not want to appear to deny the physical dimension that existed between some of these women, however, and I believe that "lesbian" practices have existed throughout history in every culture and class and that definitions and descriptions of them are always historically inflected. The most useful and inclusive term is Wahl's *female intimacy*, which she defines as "a nexus of relations not limited to sexual practice but also including social and economic ties that can operate within or cross the boundaries of heterosexual institutions such as marriage and prostitution" *Intimate Relations*, 9. As Bruce R. Smith says, "What we talk about when we talk about premodern sexualities is . . . not premodern sexualities but ideas about them." "Premodern Sexualities," 319; his article is a useful overview of contemporary approaches to studying premodern sexualities. "It is also worth bearing in mind," Emma Donoghue cautions, "that we have no idea exactly which body-to-body caresses a woman of Philips's era would have considered 'carnal' (literally, 'bodily')." *Passions between Women*, 111.

47. Lefanu, *Memoirs of . . . Mrs. Frances Sheridan*, 4. I am grateful to Shea Stuart for this quotation.

48. Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature*, 3. A number of later feminist critics have characterized Philips's form of friendship and addressed how she (and her editors) disguised its potential to threaten dominant structures of feeling. See, for example, Wahl, *Invisible Relations*, 161–70.

49. Carter, *To [Miss Lynch]*, in Carter, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 12.

50. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 15.

51. See Lilley, "Homosocial Women," 173–77, quotation from 174.

52. Katherine Philips to Charles Cotterell, 30 July 1662, *Collected Works . . . The Letters*, 12:43.

53. Jane Brereton, *Verses on the Loss of a Friend. Written in the Year 1709*, 13.

54. Masters, *Familiar Letters*, 95.

55. Carter and Talbot, *Series of Letters*, 1:56–58.

56. Masters, *Familiar Letters*, 91–92.

57. This poem is printed in the appendix to Messenger, *Woman and Poet in the Eighteenth Century*, 218–19.

58. Mary Masters, *Sent to Marinda from the North of England*, in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 121–22.

59. Elizabeth Tollet, *Adieu my Friend!* in Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1755), 154–55.

60. Elizabeth Carter, *To [Miss D'Aeth]*, 25.

61. Cf., Hawley, "Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*," 195; John M. Anderson, "*Beachy Head*," 565.

62. Lanser, "Befriending the Body," 187; see also Doody's argument that "A girl's 'dearest friend' should actually be a parent" and that the objects of women's "proper affections" were "defined with increasing fixity as the eighteenth century advanced." "Love in All Its Oddness," 492 et passim.

63. Quoted in Lisa Moore, *Dangerous Intimacies*, 1. This quotation comes from a section of the book aptly named "Female Friends, Female Fiends."

64. Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature*, 52.

65. McKeon, "Historicizing Patriarchy," 307.

66. This is very close to Margaret Ezell's definition of *feminist* in *Writing Women's Literary History*, 55.

67. Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 527.

68. Baker, *Precious Women*, 292.

69. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 87. As the century advanced, biological and social descriptions further pushed women together.

70. Lonsdale, 109. Lonsdale's notes tell us that the poem was enclosed in a letter to Lady Promfret in 1740; the references are to the religious writers John Scott and Samuel Clarke and to Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, 521. Clarke was one of the people honored with a bust in Queen Caroline's Grotto in 1733.

71. Mary Jones, *To Mrs. Clayton, with a Hare*, 52.

72. Mary Masters, *Another on the Same*, in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 70.

73. Mary Masters, *To Mrs. M.E. who gave me a Plaister*, ibid., 116–17.

74. Mary Barber, *To Mrs. Strangeways Horner*, in Barber, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 189–93.

75. Masters, *Familiar Letters*, 69–70.

76. Mary Masters, *To the Same [Mrs. Lombe]*, in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 50.

77. Mary Masters, *The Heir of Arthington, inscrib'd to Mrs. Arthington*, ibid., 76.

78. Mary Masters, *Upon the Same*, a companion poem to *To my Infant Niece; her little Sister dying the Instant she was Born*, in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 136–39, quotations from 138–39.

79. Ann Murry, *Epitaph*, in Murry, *Poems on Various Subjects*, 61.

80. Scott, 2:189. Other poems on parents' blasted hopes are Elizabeth Carter, *On the Death of Master [Quested]*, 27–28; and Catherine Rebecca Manners, *On A Child*, in Manners, *Poems by Lady Manners*, 119.

81. Mary Masters, *On the Death of Miss Molly Lombe*, in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 47. The Marinda poems are also in this book.

82. Mary Masters, *To Clemene on her Birth-day*, ibid., 111.

83. Elizabeth Carter, *To the Same [Miss Lynch]* and *To Mrs. [Montagu]*, 18–21 and 73–75,

respectively; and *To Miss Hall. 1746*, in Carter, *Memoirs*, 2:61–63. Quotations from *Poems on Several Occasions* (1776), 19 and 18, respectively.

84. Freeman, " 'A Dialogue,' " 57.

85. A number of poems console women and express shared outrage over insults. See Katherine Philips, *To the truly competent Judge of Honour*; in Philips, 45–46; Mary Barber, *To a Lady who was libelled*, in Barber, *Poetry of Mary Barber*, 131–32; and Laetitia Pilkington, *To a Lady who Defended the Author's Character*, in Tucker, 81.

86. Lonsdale, 173. Although I do not consider these poets in depth in this book, they must not be forgotten. Studies of these poets are sophisticated, beginning with Donna Landry's essential *Muses of Resistance*. See also Greene, *Mary Leapor;* Moira Ferguson, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets;* Mandell, *Misogynous Economies;* and Shiach, *Discourse on Popular Culture*, 35–70.

87. Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, 69–70.

88. Mary Masters, *To Clemene. To the Same*, *Early in the Spring*, in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 36–37.

89. Mary Masters, *Return'd in Answer*; in Masters, *Familiar Letters*, 196.

90. Cf. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, 1:18–19.

91. Jane Brereton, *On seeing Mrs. Eliz. Owen*, 38.

92. Rozsika Parker, *Subversive Stitch*, 11. This section of my chapter includes significant work by Melissa Roth.

93. Ibid., 5.

94. Jane Brereton, *On Mrs. Sybil Egerton's Singing an Anthem in Wrexham Church. June 21, 1730*, 96. Brereton is referring to the Cumaean Sybil in Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, whose prophecy gave her "a position in Christian literature and art somewhat similar to that accorded the Old Testament prophets" *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Sibylla."

95. Brereton, *On Mrs. Sybil Egerton's Singing*, 97.

96. Elizabeth Carter, *On hearing Miss L[ynch] sing*, 9.

97. Elizabeth Carter, *To Miss Lynch. 1743*, 14.

98. Mary Masters, *On a Nosegay made by Clemene*, in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 148–49.

99. Jane Brereton, *To Mrs. Roberts on her Spinning*, 100–101.

100. Constantia Grierson, *The Speech of Cupid upon seeing himself painted by the Honourable Miss Carteret (now Countess of Dysert) on a Fan*, in Tucker, 142–44.

101. See Wendorf, *Elements of Life*, 65–69, 90–98, 227–29.

102. Sarah Dixon, *The Nightingal* [*sic*], 59.

103. Sarah Dixon, *To a Lady*, 60.

104. Elizabeth Carter, *From Miss [Wilbraham]*, 42. This is one of her dialogue poems, accompanying *To Miss Wilbraham*.

105. Quoted in Guest, *Small Change*, 129.

106. Elizabeth Carter, *To Mrs. Montagu*, in Carter, *Memoirs*, 2:114.

107. Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths*, 157. He recounts Finch's exchanges with Pope as motivated in part by his dismissal of earlier women poets. See also Keith, "Poetics of Anne Finch," esp. Keith's treatment of *An Epistle from Ardelia to Mrs. Randolph* on 471–72.

108. Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, 32.

109. Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 77–83.

110. Mary Barber, *To the Right Honourable the Lady Dowager Lady Torrington*, in Barber, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 33.

111. Mary Jones, *Ode To the Right Honourable Lady Henry Beauclerk*, 157. The section of poems to Lady Beauclerk begins on 113 of *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*.

112. Martha, heiress of Neville, Lord Lovelace, married Henry Beauclerk on 25 June 1730. He was the brother of Lord Aubrey Beauclerk, who married Catherine Newton.

113. Rizzo, "Molly Leapor," 313.

114. Ann Murry, *A Familiar Epistle. To Miss Coker*; in Murry, *Poems on Various Subjects*, 113.

115. The number of women's names in dedications, prefaces, and lists of subscribers is striking. For a list of some of the women poets published by subscription, see Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England*, 190–91.

116. Ibid., 190.

117. Jane Brereton, *To the Queen*, 10.

118. For the poems about herself as a poet that Finch chose to publish, see Hinnant, 76–82.

119. Mary Savage, *On the Use—Abuse of Poetry*, 1:100.

120. Murry, *A Familiar Epistle*, 117.

121. Mary Savage, *Address to the Muse*, 1:75–77.

122. Quoted in Messenger, *Pastoral Tradition*, 39. She is quoting *To . . . Viscount Hatton*, by Finch.

123. Anne Finch, *To the Honorable the Lady Worsley at Longleate*, in Reynolds, 53. Cf. the following lines from *The Spleen:* "My Hand delights to trace unusual Things, / And deviates from the known and common Way." Reynolds, 250.

124. Mary Barber, *Apollo's Edict*, in Barber, *Poetry of Mary Barber*, 126–28. Barber revised this poem in a group that often included Swift, who is sometimes given credit for a version of the poem. For a discussion of the poems by Barber and Grierson, as well as the authorship of this one, see Backscheider, "Inverting the Image of Swift's 'Triumfeminate.' "

125. Mary Savage, *Letter to my Friend E.B.*, 1:19.

126. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *To Madam S—— at the Court*, in *Poems*, 2:46–48.

127. See, for instance, Hansen, "Pious Mrs. Rowe," which quotes the poem, calls it "feminist," and discusses it at some length.

128. Savage, *Letter to my Friend E.B.*, 1:19, 20.

129. Mary Leapor, *The Proclamation of Apollo*, in Leapor, *Poems upon Several Occasions* (1748), 42; the complete poem appears on 41–48. Identification of Artemisia was first made by Betty Rizzo in "Christopher Smart," 25; see also Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 19, 77.

130. Reeve, *To My Friend Mrs. ——*, 10–11.

131. Doody, "Women Poets of the Eighteenth Century," 228.

132. Messenger, " 'Daughter of Shenstone'?" 464.

133. Lanser, "Befriending the Body," quotation from 180.

134. Quoted in Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature*, 310.

135. Sill, *Cure of the Passions*, 18–19. Sill identifies several characters in eighteenth-century novels as this type; they include Dr. Lewis in *Humphrey Clinker* and Dr. Harrison in *Amelia*. At one point he argues that Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote* entertains the possibility of a female philosopher-physician, 21–23. It would be characteristic of Lennox to pursue this gender-stretching idea throughout her career. The idea that the ideal friendship was morally improving was common in the Renaissance. See Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, 49–51.

136. Mary Masters, *To Clemene, Leaving the Country in Autumn; Sent to Miranda from the*

North of England; and *The Consolations of Friendship,* in Masters, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733), 60, 121, and 105, respectively.

137. Fenves, "Politics of Friendship," 137.

138. Mary Savage, *The Resolution,* 2:62.

139. Mary Robinson, *Stanzas to a Friend,* in *Poems by Mrs. Robinson* (1791), 1:97–99.

140. Philips, *A Friend,* 94–97. Todd writes that "although the earlier women [Manley and Haywood] were much vilified, they were mocked by both men and women as equals, as simply other human beings. There was a gusto about the abuse and about the response." *Sign of Angellica,* 129.

141. Richard Steele, in Bond, *Tatler,* 2:444 (16 May 1720).

142. The poem is in letter 18 in Masters, *Familiar Letters,* 77–78.

143. See Wolfson, "Gendering the Soul."

144. Mary Masters, *To the same on her telling me a very acceptable piece of News,* in Masters, *Familiar Letters,* 141.

145. Curran, "Romantic Women Poets," 155, 163–64.

146. Elizabeth Carter, *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, to Mrs. Montagu* (London, 1817), 3:101. Hostesses like Lady Miller sometimes tried novel arrangements of furniture to, in Deborah Heller's words, "adapt conversational ideals to actual conditions." Mrs. Vesey tried triangles, pentagons, and "asterisk-formations." "Bluestocking Salons and the Public Sphere," 74.

147. Hobby, "Orinda and Female Intimacy," 86.

148. Quoted in Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir,* 144.

149. The following discussion of Brereton has benefited from the work of Melissa Roth, who as my research assistant wrote an overview of Brereton's poetry.

150. Brereton's work is available in only a handful of modern anthologies, and the selections are heavily excerpted and not at all representative of her best work. Not one modern critical study of her poems exists.

151. Ezell rightly points out that anonymous pieces were usually attributable to their authors because of the wide readership in manuscript. *Writing Women's Literary History,* 37. Here she is speaking of Montagu, whose manuscripts may have had wider circulation among the literary intelligentsia than those of all but a few other poets, male and female.

152. "An Account of the Life of Mrs. Brereton," in *Poems on Several Occasions.* Lonsdale speculates that the account was written by her daughter Charlotte. Lonsdale, i–xv. Biographical information comes from "An Account"; Todd; and the prefatory note in Lonsdale.

153. The decrease in the importance of London for a literary life has been noted and variously interpreted as affecting the quality of poetry negatively. Pat Rogers blames the lack of a "metropolitan elite" for poets' inability to find an "assured voice." "There is a thin-blooded air about them," he writes. *Augustan Vision,* 133–44. Anthony Barker suggests that this decreased importance "might help to explain the relative sparsity of canonical poetry from between 1740 and 1760." "Poetry from the Provinces," 249–50. See also John Sitter's thoughtful consideration of a period without a dominant voice or "school" in *Literary Loneliness,* 10–12, 77–103; and Margaret Ezell's chapter on literary life outside of London in *Social Authorship,* 103–21.

154. Barker credits the *Gentleman's Magazine* for Brereton's "re-emergence from obscurity." "Poetry from the Provinces," 254–55. Barker's essay contains details of the importance of periodical publication of women's poetry in this period. He does, how-

ever, get the number of contests wrong: there were at least six. C. Lennart Carlson lists the poems by Brereton that Cave printed. *First Magazine*, 247; on the contests, see 210–23.

155. The advertisement to Murry's poems notes that some of them are "personal or local," and a few of them are similarly impossible to interpret fully.

156. Melissa Roth points out that even though Penelope unraveled each day's work, her weaving gave her agency — control of her destiny.

157. I would argue that when Catholics or Protestants attempt to eliminate New Testament thought they inadvertently devalue the characteristics that the lives, actions, and assigned personalities of Jesus and the disciples foreground. Miles says that Moses's description of God's curses on those who disobey God's laws is "blood-chilling" and "rises to an eloquence in the depiction of horror unmatched until Dante" (145). Luke Johnson points out that the omission of the New Testament and "Jewish intertestamental, rabbinic, and mystical literature" results in a literary abstraction. Johnson, "What a Character!" 33.

158. For Behn's poetic reputation in her lifetime, see Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics*, 81–82; for Delarivière Manley's, see Rosalind Ballaster's introduction to Manley, *New Atalantis*, esp. xvi–xix; Paul Bunyan Anderson, "Mistress Delariviere Manley's Biography," 261–63, 273–78; Jerry Beasley, "Manley," *DLB*, 39:343; Linda Payne, "Manley," ibid., 80:128, 135–36; and Palomo, "Woman Writer and the Scholars."

159. Without finding a copy of the 1718 poem, it is not possible to rule out a revision by Brereton for her posthumously published *Poems on Several Occasions*.

160. Savage, *Letter to my Friend E.B.*, 1:23–25.

161. Lanser, "Befriending the Body," 185.

162. See Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, 283 et passim; and Dodd, "Englishness and the National Culture," 87–89, 91–95. Barbara Benedict elucidates the important place that writing and reading have in this movement in *Making the Modern Reader*; cf. 60–62.

163. See Perry, "Clarissa's Daughters," 121. Perry argues that readers identified with Clarissa's "plight" because they were the generation caught in changing hierarchies of values that, for instance, moved birth down on the scale of importance.

164. "Tully's Offices" was English slang for translations of Marcus Tullius Cicero's *De Officiis*, a popular gentleman's manual. John Locke, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, and numerous other writers mention it as Brereton does here — and in the same tone.

165. Ann Murry, *City Splendor*; in Murry, *Poems on Various Subjects*, 85–94. On the passion for improvements and adverse effects, see Tom Williamson, *Polite Landscapes*, 100–118. On this topic, I have benefited from the work and conversation of my colleagues Alicia Carroll and Shea Stuart.

166. Both of these attitudes are apparent in the novels of Frances Brooke. Her early novel *The History of Lady Julia Mandeville* (1763) supports agriculture and strong market towns, while the hero of her later *History of Emily Montagu* (1769) makes improvements. These attitudes are more problematized in her still later book *The Excursion* (1777).

167. Cf. *London Magazine* 48 (1779): 277.

168. MacLean, "What Is a Restoration Poem?" 319.

169. Ibid., 327–28.

170. Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 529.

171. Quoted in accounts of the trial as testimony by experts. See, for example, "The

Monthly Chronologer," *London Magazine* 50 (April 1781): 197. Donellan was depicted as having many violent quarrels with the deceased and having some economic motives for his crime. See also "Minutes of the Trial of John Donellan, Esq."

172. Doody, "Women Poets of the Eighteenth Century," 219.

173. Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 65.

174. Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, 22.

175. See Ostriker, "Thieves of Language," 319, 323.

176. Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, 21.

177. Greer, *Slip-shod Sibyl*, 21.

178. Dodd, "Englishness and the National Culture," 91–92.

179. Whateley, *Original Poems on Several Occasions*, 5.

180. Doody, "Love in All Its Oddness," 500. On this poem and the friendship between Finch and Anne Tufton, see McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 111–12. Tufton married James Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, in 1709.

181. Burr, *Of Women, Poetry, and Power*, 4–6.

182. For a brief discussion of a strain of women's poems of common life, a topic not covered in this book, see Backscheider, "Inverting the Image of Swift's 'Triumfeminate.' "

SIX: Retirement Poetry

Epigraph: Charlotte Smith, *Written September 1791, during a remarkable thunder storm*, in Curran, 53.

1. Williams, *Country and the City*, 129.

2. Sitter, *Literary Loneliness*, 9, 84–97, 217. Dustin Griffin disputes this "still influential misreading of mid- and late-eighteenth-century poetry" in his *Patriotism and Poetry*. He refers to Fredric Bogel's *Literature and Insubstantiality*, as well as to John Sitter's book, 3–5. I would say that the desire to retreat continues beside the persistence of poets, male and female, who choose to try to use poetry to participate in public-sphere debates. My book shows that retirement is but one strain of midcentury poetry.

3. Colie, *Resources of Kind*, 116.

4. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 171, 55.

5. Dryden's translation was especially influential. See Dryden, *The Works of John Dryden: Poems, 1685–1692*, 85–88, for Horace; and Kinsley, Introduction to Dryden, *Works of Virgil Translated by John Dryden*, vii–xvi, 79–83. See James Thomson's *Autumn*, lines 1235–1373, for his influential rendering of the second *Georgic*. Tim Fulford's discussion of translations of the *Georgics* emphasizes their influence, their readership, and their sustaining "a vision of empire" in " 'Nature' Poetry," 114–16.

6. Røstvig, *Happy Man* (1954), 119, 234–35. For the six motifs of the *beatus ille* theme and the retirement poem, see 1:72–73. Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from the 1954 edition.

7. Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape*, 9. Crawford lists "the group of 'true' georgics," none by women, in 268n6.

8. Addison, "Essay on the Georgics"; see also Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 202–6, 314n44. How flexible and adaptable the form was can be seen in essays such as Lilley, "Homosocial Women," which discusses, among other things, the "plebeian georgic."

9. Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry*, 4–5. Karen O'Brien notes

that there were "uneasy tonal oscillations between technical, middle, and mock-heroic registers" in some of the best-known midcentury georgics "Imperial Georgic," 162. Women's poetry is largely free from these shifts.

10. Myra Reynolds gives Thomson as an example, for, she says, he knew well the cultivated flowers he described, and "it is a pleasure to see how much he knew about birds." *Treatment of Nature in English Poetry*, 87; see also 58. Bonamy Dobrée points out that in the early-century poems the setting was given, sometimes in a quite perfunctory manner; William Walsh's *Retirement*, for instance, devotes only the first two lines to nature. As Dobrée says, "The reader was expected to fill in the details with whatever attendant delights he might associate with them." *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century*, 146.

11. Peake, "Poetry, 1700–1740," 144–45.

12. John Aikin, *Essay on the Application of Natural Description*, 1–2. Aikin is referring to all of the poetry of the time, not just retirement.

13. Biographical details about Chandler are from Lonsdale, 151–52. For a description of what the country retreat meant, see Landry, *Invention of the Countryside*, 1–4.

14. Darwall, *Rural Happiness. To a Friend*, in Whateley, *Original Poems on Several Occasions*, 29.

15. Ibid., 31. On this tradition see Røstvig, *Happy Man* (1954), still the standard source; see esp. 60–72 on the Royalist uses of the theme. I have used both the 1954 and 1971 editions because of the extensive revisions.

16. Catherine Rebecca Manners, *On Returning to Lebana in May 1788*, in Manners, *Poems by Lady Manners*, 85–88. Manners, Lady Huntingtower, published two volumes of poetry that exhibit "discerning intelligence and wide reading." Todd, s.v. "Catherine Rebecca Manners."

17. Morris, "Poetry of Absence," 230. On the merging of religious meditation and moral reflection with the poetry of natural description, see Brower, "Lady Winchilsea and the Poetic Tradition," 71ff.; and Messenger, *Pastoral Tradition*, 128–30.

18. Louis Martz, introduction to Martz, *Meditative Poem*, xvii–xxxi.

19. Lonsdale, *New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse*, 118.

20. James Sambrook, introduction to Thomson, *The Seasons*, xviii.

21. Messenger, *Pastoral Tradition*, 69–70. Messenger discusses Sarah Dixon's *The Wish* and Mary Wortley Montagu's *Constantinople*, *To* —— as such poems at some length on 67–70. See also Jean Mallinson's discussion of Anne Finch's major retirement poetry in Mallinson, "Anne Finch," 61–70.

22. See Radner and Lanser, "Strategies of Coding in Women's Culture," 7. Sitter's *Literary Loneliness* has two mentions of Anna Laetitia Barbauld's opinions (not poetry) and mentions Elizabeth Carter in a footnote.

23. Anne Finch's *Fanscomb Barn* is often discussed as a precursor to Burns's *Jolly Beggars*.

24. Even Roger Lonsdale, who knows Chudleigh's and women's poetry well, chooses it as the only poem to represent her in *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse*.

25. Marilyn L. Williamson, *Raising Their Voices*, 93.

26. Sarah Dixon, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 143.

27. Guest, *Small Change*, 151.

28. This first poem was a riddle about fire. For a list of poems published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, see Carlson, *First Magazine*, 250. For Carter's early publishing history, see Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 48–52.

29. For details on Carter's domestic responsibilities, see Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 111.

30. Jennifer Keith, "Elizabeth Carter," *DLB*, 109:54. Samuel Richardson printed Carter's *All the Works of Epictetus* in 1758.

31. See Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 11–12. Guest explores this created lifestyle, including the practice of piety, at length in *Small Change;* Carter is one of her primary subjects.

32. Quoted in Guest, *Small Change*, 101.

33. Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 49. On other displays of Carter's learning, see Guest, *Small Change*, 120.

34. See Claudia N. Thomas, " 'Th' Instructive Moral.' "

35. Elizabeth Carter, *To [Miss D'Aeth]*, 22; *To [Miss Talbot]*, 71; and *To* ——, 66.

36. Carter, *To [Miss Lynch]*, in Carter, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 13–14.

37. For a good account of Talbot's life and education, see Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 60–64, 69–74 et passim. See also Rhoda Zuk, introduction to "Catherine Talbot," in Zuk, *Catherine Talbot and Hester Chapone*, 3–17. A useful list of her works is included in the same volume.

38. See Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 222–24.

39. This was volume 2 of Chapone, *Works of Mrs. Chapone;* volume 1 was dedicated to the bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu.

40. Carter wanted to dedicate the translation to Talbot. For a good account of this, see Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 159–71; Guest, *Small Change*, 127–29; and Carolyn D. Williams, "Poetry, Pudding, and Epictetus," 16–24. Claudia Thomas describes Carter's introduction and notes as bordering "on contempt for Epictetus's principles." Thomas, " 'Th' Instructive Moral,' " 162.

41. Claudia N. Thomas, " 'Th' Instructive Moral,' " 142–43.

42. Messenger, *Pastoral Tradition*, 125.

43. Claudia N. Thomas, " 'Th' Instructive Moral,' " 148.

44. Sarah Dixon, *To the Muse*, 124.

45. See Engel, *Mapping Mortality*, 5–6, 135, and fig. PR1.

46. Sarah Dixon, *A Farewell to L—— Park*, 112–14.

47. Sarah Dixon, *On Receiving a Letter*, 157–60.

48. Mary Barber, *Written from Dublin*, in Barber, *Poetry of Mary Barber*, 123.

49. Ibid., 124–25.

50. Patey, "Anne Finch, John Dyer," 38–39.

51. Jane Brereton, *Verses on the Loss of a Friend*, 10; the whole poem is on 10–13.

52. Sena, "Melancholy in Anne Finch and Elizabeth Carter," 119. Sena points out that "probably more of the leading poets were melancholic in the eighteenth century than in any other comparable span of English history. Pope, Tickell, Young, Parnell, Thomson, Blair, Thomas Warton, Shenstone, Broome, Hammond, Collins, Gray, Moore, Watts, and Whitehead, all came before melancholy's altar with varying degrees of devoutness," 116.

53. Ibid., 116.

54. This poem has no title; its headnote is a quotation from Ovid beginning, "Felices animae quibus haec cognoscere primis." *Poems on Several Occasions*, 5.

55. Elizabeth Carter, *To Mrs. Vesey*, 97.

56. Thomson and others use *sublim'd* in "contexts of science, nature, manners, and rhetoric." Cohen, *Unfolding of the Seasons*, 76. Carter can be assumed to be using it in the same technical way.

57. The essay is printed in Carter, *Memoirs*, 2:151–54.

58. Mary Darwall, *Elegy on the Uses of Poetry*, in Whateley, *Original Poems on Several Occasions*, 109.

59. Mary Darwall, *The Pleasures of Contemplation*, ibid., 75.

60. Elizabeth Carter, *Written Extempore on the Sea-Shore*, 39.

61. Sena, "Melancholy in Anne Finch and Elizabeth Carter," 118.

62. Thomson distinguishes among landscape, prospect, vista, and view, and the prospect puts the viewer above the scene.

63. See Patey, "Anne Finch, John Dyer," 37.

64. See Sena, "Melancholy in Anne Finch and Elizabeth Carter."

65. Cf. Thomson's "Still let me pierce into the midnight Depth / Of yonder Grove, of wildest largest Grouth: / . . . / These are the Haunts of Meditation, . . ." *Summer*, lines 516–17, 522.

66. Quoted in Brant, "Varieties of Women's Writing," 299.

67. Elizabeth Tollet, *A Portrait*, in Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1755), 34. This poem also appears in her anonymously published 1724 edition.

68. Sarah Dixon, *On the Loss of Stella's Friendship*, 53–54.

69. See Backscheider, "Swift's Harley and the Nature of Biography," which brings together these writers' opinions of Harley. And see Elizabeth Hamilton's account of his firm courage around the time he was imprisoned in the Tower and during the time he fought the Peerage Bill, *Backstairs Dragon*, 274–80.

70. Hamilton, *Backstairs Dragon*, 275. Hamilton identifies Tollet but does not mention his daughter, the poet, or her poem.

71. Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape*, 9.

72. Addison, "Essay on the Georgics," 5:146.

73. See Dustin Griffin's explication of *The Fleece* in *Patriotism and Poetry*, 180–204, esp. 183 and 197.

74. Raymond Williams, *Country and the City*, 123.

75. Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths*, 146.

76. Swift, quoted from Sambrook, introduction to Thomson, *The Seasons*, xxix; Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, 1:77. Johnson is describing the type of poetry to which he assigns *Cooper's Hill*. On "locodescriptive" poetry, see Guillory, "Literary Capital."

77. O'Brien, "Imperial Georgic," 161.

78. This is a well-accepted reading of the influence of Dryden's translation. See Low, *Georgic Revolution;* Maclean, *Time's Witness*, 64–73; and O'Brien, "Imperial Georgic," 163–66.

79. Sambrook, introduction to Thomson, *The Seasons*, xxvi.

80. Radcliffe, *Forms of Reflection*, 42–43. Crawford relates the rise of georgic to "the idea of England." *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape*, 24–28, 91–92.

81. Fulford, " 'Nature' Poetry," 113.

82. *Critical Review* 13 (March 1761): 182–83.

83. Raymond Williams, *Country and the City*, 127 et passim.

84. Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty, and Authority*, 2, 13. Fulford uses Thomson's *Winter* as an example and argues that it defined "Britishness."

85. Messenger, *Pastoral Tradition*, 125.

86. Dowling, *Epistolary Moment*, 159.

87. Mary Jones, *Of Desire: An Epistle to the Hon. Miss Lovelace*, 34.

88. John Dryden, *Horace. Ode 29. Book 3*, in *The Works of John Dryden: Poems, 1685–1692*, 3:81–84.

89. Pilkington, *Memoirs*, 1:49–50. Pilkington wrote this poem one evening when she and her husband "set about" writing an ode after Horace's Ode 29, Book 3, the "happy man" passage. She says that her superior composition annoyed her husband greatly.

90. See Patey, "Anne Finch, John Dyer," 40–42. Jean Mallinson finds *Petition for an Absolute Retreat* "a fine example of how Anne Finch . . . adapted a masculine tradition . . . to her own conception of the life of contentment." Mallinson, "Anne Finch," 68.

91. Mary Darwall, *Elegy, Addressed to Mrs. Hewan*, in Darwall, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 2:65–68.

92. Printed in Dryden, *Works of John Dryden*, 6:1188.

93. Ovid, *Ovid's Fasti*, 23. The Latin is on the facing page. Radcliffe associates these reworkings of these lines by Virgil with the "new" "Augustan poetics" and identifies Denham's *Cooper's Hill* as an important precursor. Radcliffe, *Forms of Reflection*, esp. 51–52.

94. Elizabeth Carter, *While clear the night* in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 6 (June 1738): 315.

95. Carter, *While clear the night* in *Poems on Several Occasions*, 5–7. The *Gentleman's Magazine* version ends with a tribute to Thomas Wright, an astronomer and mathematician and one of Carter's teachers, and to John Theophilus Desaguliers, who invented the planetarium and had been Sir Isaac Newton's assistant.

96. See *Il Penseroso*, lines 85–94. For a discussion of the retirement and contemplation theme in the poems of Thomas May, William Habington, Milton, and others, see Røstvig, *Happy Man*, 1:154–55, 163–73.

97. Henry Vaughan, *Retirement*, in Vaughan, *Complete Poems*, 418.

98. William Wordsworth, *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, quoted in Raymond Williams, *Country and the City*, 132.

99. Elizabeth Carter, *What e're we think on't, Fortune's but a Toy*, in Carter, *Poems upon Particular Occasions*, 17.

100. Røstvig, *Happy Man*, 24–25.

101. Landry explains the importance of such spaces as central to the vision of nation in *Invention of the Countryside;* see also O'Brien, "Imperial Georgic," 160–61.

102. Sitter, *Literary Loneliness*, 9.

103. Marilyn Williamson also describes women making "significant contributions to the poetry of retirement." *Raising Their Voices*, 93.

SEVEN: The Elegy

Epigraph: Review of *The Poetical Works of Anna Seward. European Magazine* 58 (August 1810): 119. This is the opening sentence of the review of Anna Seward's posthumously published *Poetical Works*, edited by Sir Walter Scott.

1. Feldman and Robinson, *Century of Sonnets*, 10.

2. Sir Walter Scott describes Seward as "always ready to defend" her "peculiarities of taste," "nor was it easy for the professors of an opposite faith to sustain either the art of her arguments, or the authorities which her extensive acquaintance with the best British classics readily supplied." "Biographical Preface," in Scott, 1:xxvi. Stuart Curran describes her as "a literary force to be reckoned with [from at least 1784] until her death a quarter century later." "The I Altered," 187. Elizabeth Fay points out that Seward's critical biography of Darwin reveals her sense of her literary standard. "Anna Seward," 130. Samuel Holt Monk uses her numerous letters to assert the same, "Anna Seward and the Romantic

Poets." Barbauld and More were also critical arbiters but less publicly aggressive in claiming this role. For a summary of Barbauld's critical activities, including writing introductions to Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination* and an edition of William Collins's poems and producing *The British Novelists*, see Elizabeth Kraft, "Barbauld," *DLB*, 109:17–19. Rebecca Gibson notes the increasing amount of serious criticism in prefaces to women's publications. "My Want of Skill," 82–84.

3. Clara Reeve, *The Praise of Shakespeare*, 72.

4. Christie, *Wars and Revolutions*, 158–59; Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, 418. Ireland was not incorporated into the United Kingdom until 1801.

5. Wordsworth brought a letter of introduction to Williams from Charlotte Smith in 1791. M. Ray Adams, "Helen Maria Williams and the French Revolution," 89.

6. Helen Maria Williams, *Ode on the Peace*, in Williams, *Poems*, 1:55.

7. Curran, "The I Altered," 187.

8. Butt, *Mid-Eighteenth Century*, 80; Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue*, 334. See also Fairer, "Creating a National Poetry"; and Cohen, "Return to the Ode," 221, who dates the renewal of poetic genres to the 1740s. Hamlin argues that the project of making kinds English is apparent in psalm translations in the Renaissance. *Psalm Cultures*, 1, 6, 103–4.

9. Among the most interesting hypotheses offered to explain the erasure of the women poets of the century is that of Richard Terry, who surveys end-of-the-century projects such as Robert Anderson's *Works of the British Poets* and argues that women's exclusion from them is a major factor. *Poetry and the Making of the Literary Past*, 259, 277; for his survey of these "national collections," see 252–53. More mundanely, political poetry often dates itself with topical references, and some women were castigated for writing politically.

10. Draper, *Funeral Elegy*, 295.

11. Thompson, "Pope's *Unfortunate Lady*," 120. Thompson calls this elegy "lyric poetry of feminine desire, 121.

12. Quoted in Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 206.

13. Tibullus, *Poems of Tibullus*, 7–8. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Tibullus's poems are from the Carrier translations. I have collated Constance Carrier's translations with the Loeb's Classical Library translations by J. P. Postgate in Catullus, Tibullus, and Pervigilium Veneris, *Catullus*, *Tibullus*, *and Pervigilium Veneris*, but have selected Carrier's for their modernity.

14. Pauline Aikin, *Influence of the Latin Elegists*, 12; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Ovidian Elegiac Metre Described and Exemplified," in Coleridge, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1:308.

15. Quoted in Butt, *Mid-Eighteenth Century*, 79.

16. Samuel Johnson, "Essay on Epitaphs," 593.

17. Stuart Curran has found "about 50" elegies in which women look "to a predecessor or contemporary for example and support." "Romantic Women Poets," 161.

18. John Brewer has collected contemporary descriptions and portrays the Batheaston gatherings and reputation in *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 601–4.

19. Elizabeth Tollet, *On the Death of Sir Isaac Newton*, in Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1756), 130.

20. The phrase is Oliver Goldsmith's in the *Bee* 8 (24 November 1759), cited in Aline M. Taylor's study of Otway's reputation, *Next to Shakespeare*, 3.

21. Mary Jones, *In Memory of the Rt. Hon. Lord Aubrey Beauclerk, Who was slain at Carthagena*, 36–44.

22. On the broadside elegy, see Draper, *Funeral Elegy*, 310. Tibullus's Elegy 1.3 has an

epitaph for himself in *Poems of Tibullus*, 41. Esther Schor has argued that Gray's *Elegy* moves from private virtues to public and sets an example for others. *Bearing the Dead*, 46.

23. Donald Reiman, introduction to Opie, *Amelia Opie. Poems*, ix–x.

24. Mary Robinson, *Monody on the Death of Mr. Garrick*, in Robinson, *Mary Robinson: Poems, 1791*, 73; for the whole poem, see 72–74.

25. Elizabeth Carter, *On the Death of Mrs. Rowe*, in Lonsdale, 167.

26. Clara Reeve, *On the Death of Churchill*, 66.

27. Zionkowski, *Men's Work*, 162–63.

28. Reeve's *Elegy written at Putney in the Year MDCCLIX* echoes both *Elegy in a Country Church-Yard* and *An Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.* It opens, "Illusive joys the gaudy world holds forth / To sooth her children in her ways untry'd." In this rather gauche effort, the speaker gives up on hopes of love, friendship, and poetic achievement. The poem, however, expresses high ambitions; the opening image is of Icarus, "On Fancy's pinions borne . . . / . . . wantons in the blaze," 1.

29. Mary Jones, *Elegy On a favorite Dog*, 58. The complete poem is on 56–60.

30. Susanna Blamire, *Written in a Churchyard*, in Blamire, *Susanna Blamire: The Poetical Works*, 164–65.

31. Lilley, "True State Within," 87. Chapter 6 of Messenger's *Pastoral Tradition* discusses some of the most important pastoral elegies by women poets. They include poems by Elizabeth Thomas, Elizabeth Tollet, and a number of poets in Finch's generation.

32. Schenck, "Feminism and Deconstruction," 13.

33. Messenger believes the form uncomfortable for women because of its "intense professionalism," among other reasons. *Pastoral Tradition*, 97–113; chap. 6 of her book examines the professional nature of elegy. Donald Mell also notes the professionalism of the poets as affecting the character of their elegies. *Poetics of the Augustan Elegy*, 10–11.

34. Mell, *Poetics of the Augustan Elegy*, 15.

35. Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning*, 20–21. Ramazani considers Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Adrienne Rich, and Amy Clampitt in depth.

36. Draper, *Funeral Elegy*, 302.

37. Schor, *Bearing the Dead*, 57–60.

38. Sacks, *English Elegy*, 13, 26–31. Sacks concludes, however, that men's and women's elegies "confirm . . . common ground." See also ibid., 128–32, on Dryden's *To the Memory of Mr. Oldham.*

39. Mary Robinson, *A Pastoral Elegy*, in Robinson, *Poems by Mrs. Robinson* (1775), 17.

40. Mary Chudleigh, *On the Death of his Highness the Duke of Glocester*, in Ezell, 47–59. In her explication of the poem, Ann Messenger points out that Chudleigh had lost three children and that another was ill and would soon die. *Pastoral Tradition*, 95.

41. Barash, " Political Origins," 336.

42. This poem in its "more emphatically pro-Stuart" form is printed from the manuscript in ibid., 331.

43. See Zeiger, *Beyond Consolation*, 1–3. I have benefited from this thoughtful book.

44. Bowra, *Early Greek Elegists*, 3.

45. Eliane Fantham, introduction to Ovid, *Fasti*, 7; see her survey on 9–25.

46. For an overview of the Greek and Roman elegy, its various subjects, and major practitioners, see Sacks, *English Elegy*, 2–7; and Fantham, introduction to Ovid, *Fasti*, 7–25.

47. Mary Leapor, *The Beauties of the Spring*, in Leapor, *Poems upon Several Occasions* (1748), 17.

48. Quoted in Bowra, *Early Greek Elegists*, 8; on autobiographical elements, see 7–12.

49. Arthur S. Williams, "Making 'Intrest and Freedom Agree,' " 435.

50. Sappho, *We put the urn aboard ship*, in Sappho, *Sappho: A New Translation*, 20.

51. Tibullus, *Divitias alius Fulvo*, in *Poems of Tibullus*, Book 1, Elegy 1, p. 35.

52. Quoted from the *Amores* in Boyd, *Ovid's Literary Loves*, 168.

53. Lady Morgan, *The Recantation*, in Owenson, *Poems*, 29. She is best known for her 1806 novel, *The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale*.

54. See Boyd, *Ovid's Literary Loves*, 9.

55. Robert Herrick, *To Live Merrily, and to trust to Good Verses*, lines 37–52, in Herrick, *Complete Poetry*, 114–15, 115n7.

56. Hannah More, *Sensibility*, in More, *Works*, 1:144. Frances Glanville Boscawen was famed as a hostess and letter writer. She was married to Edward Boscawen, Pitt's most trusted admiral and, in time, Lord of the Admiralty. Her letters have been compared to those of Mme de Sevigné. Todd, s.v. "Boscawen." On Boscawen's Bluestocking qualities, see Ford, *Hannah More*, 67–68.

57. Editions of Tibullus's *Works* were published in 1720 and 1721, and collections of his poems, sometimes with those of Catullus and Propertius, were published in 1749, 1751, 1753, 1759, as well as in the 1770s and 1780s.

58. Pauline Aikin, *Influence of the Latin Elegists*, 20–22. Aikin counts the editions of Tibullus's work before 1600.

59. The poem is printed from West's letter to Gray in Tovey, *Gray and His Friends*, 95–98. West had sent Gray another translation of Tibullus a year and a half earlier (87). In that letter, dated 22 December 1736, he calls Tibullus his favorite elegiac poet. The first two books of Tibullus's elegies were published before his death in 19 B.C. The third book, which was added after his death, was divided by Renaissance scholars into two books and is called the "Messalla collection." The first six poems are by Lygdamus; there are five poems on love of Sulpicia, perhaps by Tibullus, six short pieces by Sulpicia, and several other poems, including a panegyric of Messalla. J. P. Postgate, "Tibullus," in Catullus, Tibullus, and Pervigilium Veneris, *Catullus, Tibullus, and Pervigilium Veneris*, 187. See also the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Tibullus."

60. George Lyttleton, *Part of an Elegy of Tibullus, Translated*, in Dodsley, *Collection of Poems in Six Volumes* (1758), 2:52–54.

61. See the commentary in Ball, *Tibullus the Elegist*, 143–46, 150–63. Ball notes that scholars praise lines 83–90 "almost without exception, as one of the finest [elegy resolutions] in Latin poetry," 159.

62. Manners, *Review of Poetry*, 23.

63. Shenstone, "Essay on Elegy," in Shenstone, *Essays on Men and Manners*, 329; Shenstone, "Elegies in Hammond's Meter," esp. 1:23–27.

64. Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, preface to James Hammond, *Love Elegies*, iii–iv. Representative poems in which Tibullus's influence is clear are elegies 1, *On his falling in Love with Naera*, and 7, *On Delia's being in the Country, where he supposes she stays to see the Harvest*, unpaginated. On the illusion of sincerity, so important to the poetry of Tibullus and Propertius, see Allen, "Sincerity and the Roman Elegists"; and Boyd, *Ovid's Literary Loves*, 141–42.

65. Mary Darwall, *Imitation of the Third Elegy of the Third Book of Tibullus*, in Whateley, *Original Poems on Several Occasions*, 41.

66. Guillory, "Literary Capital," 403; McCarthy and Kraft, introduction, 11–12.

67. Kraft, "Barbauld," *DLB*, 109:14.

68. The editors of Barbauld's poetry, William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, cite the elegies from Book 1 but do not parallel lines M&K, 265; *Delia. An Elegy* appears on 72–74.

69. Messenger, *Woman and Poet in the Eighteenth Century*, 1–4.

70. Quoted in ibid., 93. Messenger provides a list of the places where Darwall's verses were printed.

71. Henry Carey, *Sonnet*, prefixed to Seward, *Llangollen Vale, with Other Poems;* Monk, "Anna Seward and the Romantic Poets," 128; Guest, *Small Change*, 253. See also Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 573–612.

72. *Analytical Review* 23 (April 1796): 386.

73. Quoted in Guest, *Small Change*, 252.

74. The first reading was in 1796; *Leonora* had been translated by Scott (as *The Chase and William and Helen*) and William R. Spencer in that same year. Her voice and ability to read aloud were already recognized from her Batheaston days. Ashmun, *Singing Swan*, 74.

75. Quoted in Monk, "Anna Seward and the Romantic Poets," 130.

76. *Gentleman's Magazine* 55 (March 1785). The memoir is "The Minstrel of Woodlow, introduced by Miss Seward," 169–70, and the poem, which has no title, appears on 213–14.

77. Quoted in Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 576.

78. On Darwall's friendship with Langhorne, see Messenger, *Woman and Poet in the Eighteenth Century*, 51–59.

79. Mary Darwall, *Elegy written in a Garden*, in Whateley, *Original Poems on Several Occasions*, 58.

80. The title had been revived for him in 1776; he had married the granddaughter of Henry Hyde, the fourth and last earl of Clarendon, *DNB*, s.v. "Thomas Villiers."

81. Guillory and others have noticed this distance; see, for instance, his "Literary Capital," 405–7, in which he notes that Barbauld's *Warrington Academy* and Denham's *Cooper's Hill* make statements about class and social relationships.

82. Messenger treats Darwall's *Liberty, an Elegy* in some detail and reprints it in an appendix, *Woman and Poet in the Eighteenth Century*, 24–26, 72–74. See also Messenger, "'Daughter of Shenstone'?"; and Messenger, "William Shenstone and Mary Whateley Darwall," in *Gender at Work*, 30–31. Publication information is from *Gender at Work*, 30, as is information on Darwall's revisions, 47–48.

83. Shenstone, "Essay on Elegy," 332–33.

84. Ibid., 331–32.

85. Messenger, *Woman and Poet in the Eighteenth Century*, 81.

86. Haggerty, "Desire and Mourning," 189.

87. Quoted in Monk, "Anna Seward and the Romantic Poets," 123.

88. Sacks, *English Elegy*, 37 and chap. 3.

89. Seward, *Elegy on Captain Cook*, in Scott, 2:33–46. Cook was killed in 1779 by Hawaiian natives. For an explication of the kind of hero Seward makes Cook, see Guest, *Small Change*, 258–59.

90. *Critical Review* 51 (April 1781): 231.

91. Ashmun notes that "his name was literally a household name" and explains why in *Singing Swan*, 97–99.

92. See Gerald Newman, "The Moral Elevation of the English National Identity," in Newman, *Rise of English Nationalism*, 123–56, for a complementary view. He does not mention women poets.

93. Walsh, *Execution of Major Andre*, 6, 176.

94. *Critical Review* 51 (April 1781): 231.

95. See Guest's detailed reading of the national "projects" of both of these poems in *Small Change*, esp. 258–65. I have benefited from this chapter of Guest's book.

96. On André's distress at the ignominy of hanging, which Seward appears to have well understood, see Walsh, *Execution of Major Andre*, 138, 143–44.

97. Shenstone, "Essay on Elegy," 332.

98. Guest, *Small Change*, 266–67.

99. *Town and Country* 13 (1781): 211.

100. Charles Rochemont Aikin was the son of Anna Laetitia Barbauld's younger brother John, and she asked her brother and his wife for him. His middle name, Laetitia's husband's name, suggests that biographers are correct to say that he was "bespoken by them" even before his birth. LeBreton, *Memoir of Mrs. Barbauld*, 43. I am grateful to my research assistant Sara Brown for researching this adoption.

101. Quoted in Ashmun, *Singing Swan*, 173.

102. According to an August 1764 letter included in Scott, 1:cxliii–cxliv.

103. Haggerty, *Unnatural Affections*, 75. Haggerty cites well-known Austen studies, including Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," in Sedgwick, *Tendencies;* and Castle, "Sister-Sister," 3. Ellen Pollak's *Incest and the English Novel* is limited to the novel and considers a brother-sister relationship, while Brown, *Devoted Sisters*, is almost entirely about nineteenth-century works, but see 11 and 135–36.

104. Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius*, 138; Anne Bannerman, *The Nun*, in *Poems by Anne Bannerman* (1800), 37, 42.

105. Fenves, "Politics of Friendship," 141. And see Sedgwick's list in *Epistemology of the Closet*, 52–53.

106. Haggerty, *Unnatural Affections*, 75.

107. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 25–26. The first item is, "Even identical genital acts mean very different things to different people."

108. Castle, "Sister-Sister," 3.

109. Lanser, "Befriending the Body," 183. Lanser is referring to Blanche Hardy's research.

110. Ashmun and others note Seward's angry poetry about Richard and Honora. Cf. *Singing Swan*, 79–81.

111. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 15. See also Haggerty, *Unnatural Affections*, 12; Castle, "Sister-Sister," 3; Brown, *Devoted Sisters*, 140, 141, 149; and esp. Donoghue, *Passions between Women*, 130–38. Donoghue concludes, "Women writers often used a heterosexual plot as a framework for a safe discussion of women's love for each other," 138.

112. Ashmun, *Singing Swan*, 48.

113. Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life*, 28.

114. Ashmun calls Seward Honora's "proxy," *Singing Swan*, 36. She quotes this letter on 37. Walsh corroborates Seward's descriptions of André's charm, his skill at drawing, and his effeminate means of charming others. See esp. descriptions by Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, and the man captured with André in Walsh, *Execution of Major Andre*, 4, 20, 96–97.

115. On the nervous sexual energy of sensibility, see Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 141–81.

116. Inaccuracies were noted by a reviewer writing in the *Monthly Review* 64 (May 1781): 373, and inaccuracies are also noted in *DNB*, s.v. "John André." For an account of

Washington clearing himself, see Ashmun, *Singing Swan*, 83–86. How much Seward changed or obscured is clear from Walsh, *Execution of Major Andre*.

117. *Monthly Review* 64 (May 1781): 373.

118. Seward, *Letters*, 4:143. Quotations from Seward's letters are from this edition.

119. Ibid., 4:347, 388; 5:10. See also Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 607.

120. Quotations from *Gentleman's Magazine* 66 (May 1796): 413 and *New Annual Register* 17 (1796): 263. The phrase "rendered peculiarly interesting by the introduction of an elegant tribute . . . to . . . the female friends" appears in *Analytical Review* 23 (April 1796): 386; see also 386–88.

121. *Monthly Review* 20 (June 1796): 151–52.

122. *European Magazine* 29 (April 1796): 260. The reference is to the March 1794 number.

123. See, for example, *British Critic* 7 (1796): 404.

124. Glendower is described in *New Annual Register* 17 (1796): 263. Information on Owen Glendower is from the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Owen Glendower."

125. Bradley, *Owen Glyndwr*, 45–47.

126. Cf. Bromwich, *Beginnings of Welsh Poetry*, 83.

127. The poet's name, assuming there was a single poet, is transliterated differently from the Welsh. Pennant, *Tour in Wales*, 1:296–301, 333–94. Pennant includes a translation of a dreadful, probably fraudulent poem on Howel's rejection.

128. Castle, "Sister-Sister," 6. Seward kept a lock of her sister Sarah's hair, and it also awakened memories. See her Sonnet LXXXI.

129. For important passages on their relationships, see Seward, *Letters*, 5:16–17, 108–10; 6:50–51.

130. Seward's most extensive descriptions of the history and lifestyle of Butler and Ponsonby are in ibid., 4:89–93, 98–105; see esp. 4:104, 120, and 210.

131. For a good overview of sensibility in the period, see Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, esp. 1–36; the quotation is from xvii.

132. Chris Jones, "Radical Sensibility," 68; Schor, *Bearing the Dead*, 73–114.

133. Haggerty, *Unnatural Affections*, 4.

134. *Critical Review* 51 (April 1781): 231.

135. *Gentleman's Magazine* 66 (May 1796): 594.

136. *British Critic* 7 (April 1796): 405.

137. *General Evening Post*, 24 July 1790, 3. This account described the women as a butch couple, with Lady Eleanor "always" in a riding habit.

138. *English Review* 27 (April 1796): 380.

139. Chris Jones, "Radical Sensibility," 80.

140. I am obviously less sanguine about the culture's acceptance of Ponsonby and Butler than Lanser is in her fine essay "Befriending the Body" and closer to Donoghue, who questions "the idea that [this kind of] female friendship was considered entirely acceptable and harmless." *Passions between Women*, 150.

141. Quoted in Haggerty, *Unnatural Affections*, 91. Donoghue describes *Satan's Harvest Home* as "a lipsmacking catalogue of vices." *Passions between Women*, 64. For an overview of Sappho's reputation at that time, see Andreadis, *Sappho in Early Modern England*, 28–83.

142. Stanley, "Epistemological Issues," 163.

143. See Haggerty, *Unnatural Affections*, 89–92; Donoghue, *Passions between Women*, 109–11; and Wahl, *Invisible Relations*, 8–13 et passim. Lanser's evidence agrees. "Befriending the Body," 192–93.

144. Cf. Wahl, *Invisible Relations*, 11–12, 77.

145. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 18.

146. Zeiger, *Beyond Consolation*, 5.

147. Boehrer, "Lycidas."

148. Gilmore, *Autobiographics*, 17.

149. I would trace an uninterrupted stream of women dating from at least the Restoration. Linda Colley demonstrates in *Britons* that by the 1790s women were playing new, active roles in the public political sphere by doing such things as canvassing for elections; and Dustin Griffin includes a chapter on some of the "female patriots" in *Patriotism and Poetry*. He mentions the opinion that women were incapable of true patriotism, 30–31.

150. Janet Todd identifies the "constructed nature of female consciousness, formed in the eighteenth century to an extraordinary extent through fiction" in *Sign of Angellica*.

151. *Analytical Review* 23 (April 1796): 386.

152. See Backscheider, "Fashioning Novels, Novelizing Fashions."

153. Helen Maria Williams, *Euphelia, An Elegy*, in Williams, *Poems*, 2:191.

154. Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning*, 295–97. Draper also associates the form with women and expresses contempt for it in *Funeral Elegy*, 302.

155. Rothstein, *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, 143.

156. Sacks, *English Elegy*, xii.

157. Thompson, "Pope's *Unfortunate Lady*," 121.

158. See Engel, *Mapping Mortality*.

159. Zeiger, *Beyond Consolation*, 63.

160. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Epitaph*, in H&G, 215–16. This poem was printed in 1763 in Montagu, *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M——y W——y M——e*.

161. Lilley, "True State Within," 74.

162. The quotations are from Schenck, "Feminism and Deconstruction," 24 and 23 respectively.

EIGHT: The Sonnet, Charlotte Smith, and What Women Wrote

Epigraph: Anna Seward, *To Mr. Henry Cary*, in Scott, 3:185.

1. *Critical Review* 34 (January 1802): 393. For a good overview of the sonnet revival and the sonnet's reestablishment as a major form of lyric poetry, see Feldman and Robinson, *Century of Sonnets*, 3–19.

2. Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, 30–31. Most of the best work on Smith has been on her rich imagery, such as the moon or roses, rather than on her poetic corpus or even a single edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*.

3. See Ross, *Contours of Masculine Desire;* and Pascoe, *Romantic Theatricality*, 4–6 et passim. Ross describes the literary milieu of the early Romantics as "a war" between masculine and feminine poetry, the latter a mostly forgotten "movement" for which "we do not even have a literary term"; see 5, 55, 155–83. Keats complained of both the "legitimate" and "the other kind" of sonnet and said he was "endeavouring to discover a better sonnet stanza than we have." Quoted in Daniel Robinson, "Reviving the Sonnet," 107.

4. Smith may have derived her title from the label given Thomas Gray's *Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West*, which was published posthumously in 1775. His "elegiac sonnet," with its affinities to the poetry of sensibility and melancholy, was endlessly reprinted in collections.

5. My discussion of Charlotte Smith's poetry has benefited greatly from Stuart Curran's fine edition of her poetry, *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*.

6. Milton bought a copy of della Casa's *Rime e prose* (1563) in 1629, annotated it thoroughly, and copied at least one additional della Casa sonnet into it. Milton, *Complete Shorter Poems*, 89; I am grateful to my colleague Drew Clark for this reference.

7. Butt, *Mid-Eighteenth Century*, 64.

8. Ibid., 131 (this section has been influenced by Butt's book); Edwards, *Canons of Criticism;* Edwards, *Sonnets of Thomas Edwards.*

9. Mary Monck, *Sonetto. From Monsignor Della Casa*, in Colman and Thornton, *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, 2:189–90.

10. Catherine Talbot, *Sonnet: In ye Manner of Petrarch*, in Zuk, *Catherine Talbot and Hester Chapone*, 158. See also Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 113–17, 216–20.

11. On the popularity of river sonnets, see Feldman and Robinson, *Century of Sonnets*, 9 and 12. William Lisle Bowles's *Fourteen Sonnets* were loosely structured in two sequences around two journeys, one up the east coast of England into Scotland, and the other across the North Sea to Ostend and from there up the Rhine before returning to England.

12. Helen Maria Williams, *Sonnet: To Twilight*, in Ashfield, *Romantic Women Poets*, 67.

13. Coleridge, *Sonnets from Various Authors*, 1.

14. Daniel Robinson, "Reviving the Sonnet," 115.

15. Ben Jonson's *To Penshurst* is one of his best-known poems, and Edmund Waller wrote two, both titled *At Penshurst:* "While in this Park I sing" and "Had *Dorothea* liv'd when mortals made / Choice of their deities" (Lady Dorothy was Waller's Sacharissa). See also *Penshurst* by Francis Coventry in Dodsley, *Collection of Poems in Four Volumes*, 4:50–61.

16. In 1988 British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher cited the superiority of the British Revolution and liberty at a French event and was allegedly seated behind a pillar at a state dinner in retaliation.

17. Dolben, MP from Oxford, horrified the nation with his report and in the next year introduced the Slave Limitation Bill to restrict the number of slaves that could be carried per ship's tonnage and to provide for bounties for the captain and surgeon based on the number of slaves landed alive.

18. This summary is in Labbe, "Charlotte Smith, *Beachy Head*," 204. Unfortunately, Labbe's book on Smith appeared after my book was in production.

19. Ibid., 208; the quotation is from 210n5.

20. Charlotte Smith, *Desmond*, 45.

21. See Kari Lokke's comparison of this sonnet to Wordsworth's poetry in "Mild Dominion of the Moon," 88–92.

22. Neil Fraistat and Susan Lanser point out that Helen Maria Williams "imagines the entire Revolution as a sublime spectacle" beginning with her popular 1790 *Letters Written in France*. Fraistat and Lanser, introduction, 14–15. Esther Schor interprets many of these same poems as examples of Smith in dialogue with Gray and his tradition and her sense of a "gendered exclusion" from it. *Bearing the Dead*, 65–66.

23. Lokke, "Mild Dominion of the Moon," 89; see her discussion of this poem and the political symbolism in Smith's poetry on 86–90. Lokke sees the poem as more exemplary of "Romantic transcendence" than I do.

24. Quoted in Loraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith*, 339.

25. Even as sympathetic a critic as Brent Raycroft unproblematically assumes that the sonnets are autobiographical, about "her multiple misfortunes," and "typically bleak and

hyperbolic." "From Charlotte Smith to Nehemiah Higginbottom," quotations from 376 and 372. Adela Pinch says the sonnets represent Smith "as a perpetual slave to despondency, regret, and grief." *Strange Fits of Passion*, 55. Anna Seward, who felt competitive toward Smith, called the sonnets the "everlasting lamentables." Seward, *Letters*, 2:287. For a summary of the early history of this reputation, see Hoagwood, introduction, 4–6. Schor examines Smith's sonnets as a cycle but concludes that they are a "tale of her own rhetorical failure to evoke pathos" and not a development of the moods of melancholy but a kind of burnout. *Bearing the Dead*, 60–69.

26. Sonnet sequences were extremely common, and even when they may not have been intended as sequences by the author, they might be published as such. Common linkings were theme, narrative, mood, motif, and voice. See Spiller, *Sonnet Sequence*, 2–3, 16, 81, et passim; and Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, esp. 58–97 and 141–61.

27. Rossetti, *Introduction*, in *The House of Life*, 176.

28. Quoted in Spiller, *Sonnet Sequence*, 7.

29. Wagner, *Moment's Monument*, 14.

30. John Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, lines 44–45.

31. Spiller points out how popular this difficult form was in the sixteenth century, the heyday of European sonnet writing. See his *Sonnet Sequence*, 2–3; and Spiller, *Development of the Sonnet*, 83. An example of Smith's creativity within the chain is Sonnet XLV, *The return of the nightingale. Written in May 1791*.

32. Melancholy became the most common sonnet mood, and so influential was it that in his criticism Coleridge described the sonnet as a little poem in which some lonely feeling is developed. *Sonnets from Various Authors*, 1. For an overview of attitudes to melancholy in the century, see Ober, "Eighteenth-Century Spleen." Thomas Warton's *Pleasures of Melancholy* (1747) contributed to the fad; his poem contains all of the stock imagery of the time, and he presents his poem as an expansion of Milton's *Il Penseroso*.

33. Mary B. Moore, *Desiring Voices*, 152.

34. Rachel Crawford argues that Smith casts "the speaker in the traditionally male persona of the poet/wanderer" and explores the ways this construct manipulates gender codes and poetic conventions. "Troping the Subjects," 263–64. Daniel Robinson also says that she "takes on the persona of a lonely wanderer, which she only partially drops in later editions," "Reviving the Sonnet," 108. Stuart Curran goes further and says that her "constant theme" is of a "rootless exile," "The I Altered," 200. See also Schor on the wanderer in sonnets and poems of the time, *Bearing the Dead*, 67–72.

35. Among the works of the great Romantics, only Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Ozymandias* seems related to this innovation. Judith Hawley has also noticed Smith's "ventriloquizing," but her focus is on Smith's manipulation of autobiography. "Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*."

36. Earlier examples in the eighteenth-century novel include Jane Barker's Galesia novels and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*.

37. See Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 4–6; and Pennant, *Tour in Wales*, 1:456–78.

38. Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 34.

39. See the prefaces collected in Curran, 3–12, especially that for the second volume (1797). For an excellent account of Smith's use of personal information, see Zimmerman, " 'Dost thou not know my voice?' "

40. Pratt, "Charlotte Smith's Melancholia," quotation from 571.

41. Mary B. Moore, *Desiring Voices*, 151. See also Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion*, 8–9.

42. Cf. Janet MacArthur, " 'A *Sydney*, though Un-named,' " 12–13.

43. Kennedy, "Thorns and Roses"; Crawford, "Troping the Subject," 263–69; Daniel Robinson, "Reviving the Sonnet," 117. Kennedy also assumes that the voice is autobiographical.

44. Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, 148.

45. The first statement is in her dedication to William Cowper, and the second in her first note to the poem. Curran, 131–32.

46. See Wagner, *Moment's Monument*, 15, discussing Wordsworth. Hartman's quotation appears on the same page.

47. Spiller, *Development of the Sonnet*, 192. This formal feature of the sonnet is what Zimmerman has described as Smith's appearing to turn away from her readers, "appearing to ignore them, by seeming absorbed in thought and oblivious to her surroundings." " 'Dost thou not know my voice?' " 102.

48. Hawley, "Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*," 184, 186–87.

49. See ibid., 191–94. Hawley explicates this poem similarly, and her essay has contributed to my understanding of Smith's use of quotations. There are differences between Smith's memory of Milton's lines and the lines he published in *Lycidas*, which are 135 and 151.

50. Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion*, 60.

51. Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 87–88. Guillory also notes that Gray compiled three commonplace books.

52. Butt, *Mid-Eighteenth Century*, 75. Butt says that the same pleasures are found in poetry by Milton, Pope, Wordsworth, Keats, and T. S. Eliot.

53. Hawley, "Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*," 194. Daniel Robinson says that Smith was writing for a literary audience "who would no doubt recognize Smith's various literary references." "Reviving the Sonnet," 112. Pratt points out that "Smith's speaker continually praises, quotes, and impersonates writers of sensibility" and that, "with the exception of Collins, [they] were all accepted as aesthetic exemplars." "Charlotte Smith's Melancholia," 564. Guillory, Hawley, and Pratt all characterize Smith as claiming cultural capital.

54. Wolfson, "Charlotte Smith's *Emigrants*," 527–29, 536–42; John M. Anderson, "*Beachy Head*," 548–60 passim, quotation from 558.

55. Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 88.

56. *New Annual Register . . . for the Year 1784*, 268–69.

57. Cf. *Monthly Review* 71 (November 1784): 368. Each number of the *Monthly Review* renewed the controversy, and many other periodicals participated. For an example of the longevity of the debate, see *Critical Review* 61 (June 1786): 467.

58. Coleridge, *Sonnets from Various Authors*, 2.

59. John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, published love letters attributed to Otway in 1697, and later Mrs. Barry was identified as the recipient. As J. Douglas Canfield says, Otway's life was romanticized, and the facts will never known. "Disturbed" is Canfield's accurate description. For a good overview, see Canfield, "Otway," *DLB* 80:148–71.

60. *Critical Review* 61 (June 1786): 467–68; *Monthly Magazine* 23 (1807): 247.

61. *Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure* 91 (December 1792): 408–14.

62. Anna Seward, preface to *Original Sonnets*, iii.

63. Trott, "Too Good for Them," 3.

64. Judith Pascoe supplies quotations: "the dignified title of *the English Sappho:* a title which was long since bestowed on [Robinson] by the *literary tribunal* of the country." "Mary Robinson and the Literary Marketplace," 258–59.

65. Quoted in Kate Ravin, "Charlotte Smith," *DLB* 109:252. Daniel Robinson points

out that Seward's snipes at Smith's sonnets intensified throughout her life. "Reviving the Sonnet," 111–12.

66. Mary Robinson, "Preface to *Sappho and Phaon* (1796)," 268–69.

67. It should be noted that all the women poets wrote sonnets like Smith's; see, for example, Robinson's *To Amicus* and *Written at Sea, Sept. 1, 1792* and Darwall's *Sonnet to Time.*

68. Colie, *Resources of Kind*, 107. See also Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion*, 8–9.

69. Mary Robinson, "Preface to *Sappho and Phaon* (1796)," 268.

70. For details of Bannerman's life, see Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius*, 130–32, 242nn32–37.

71. Anne Bannerman, *Sonnet V. To the Owl*, in *Poems by Anne Bannerman* (1800), 81. On Bannerman and Smith, see Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius*, 136–38.

72. Anne Bannerman, *The Soldier*, in *Poems by Anne Bannerman* (1800), 78; Smith's is in Curran, 60.

73. Yet Eliza Tuite wrote in *Written at the Close of the Year 1794*, "But of this fatal Ninety-four, / By treason blasted, steep'd in gore." Fullard, 349.

74. See Wagner, *Moment's Monument*, 12–13.

75. Bannerman, *Songs from Werter*, in *Poems by Anne Bannerman: A New Edition*, 220; the sonnets are on 45–54, and the keys on 218–20.

76. Judith Pascoe says that it is hard to "overplay the role of Robinson's affair with the Prince of Wales in her later literary and social reception." Introduction, 38. Instead of the twenty thousand pounds, she received an annuity of five hundred pounds from the prince. Franklin, Introduction, 1:ix. Franklin's introduction gives a good overview of Robinson's poetry.

77. Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life*, 2:135–36. Robinson was more extravagant than truly needy; she and Tarleton had Tarleton's half-pay and the occasional payment of her five-hundred-pound annuity from the prince. Pascoe, 33.

78. In addition to poetry, she wrote six novels, political tracts, two plays, and most of the *Memoirs*, which her daughter would complete and publish. Todd, s.v. "Robinson."

79. For an introductory discussion of Robinson as a periodical poet, see Pascoe, "Mary Robinson and the Literary Marketplace," 252–68, 312–15.

80. Mary Robinson, *Ode to Eloquence*, in *Mary Robinson: Poems, 1791*, 44.

81. The few critics who have worked with Robinson's texts agree on the importance and ambition of this work. Terence Hoagwood and Rebecca Jackson call it "intellectually and artistically important." Introduction, 3. Jerome McGann says it is "the single most important English contribution to the Sapphic tradition." "Mary Robinson and the Myth of Sappho," 114.

82. Quotation from Mary Robinson, "To the Reader," *Sappho to Phaon*, reprinted in Robinson, *Sappho and Phaon*, 17. "Account to Sappho" is also in this edition.

83. McGann sees the sequence as "a comprehensive manifesto," "a theory and practice," for the poetry of sensibility, then seen as "new and innovative." "Mary Robinson and the Myth of Sappho," quotation from 123–24.

84. Daniel Robinson, "Reviving the Sonnet," 110.

85. Helen Maria Williams, *Sonnet: To the Strawberry*, in Ashfield, *Romantic Women Poets*, 77.

86. Quoted in Fraistat and Lanser, introduction, 18. For a good summary of Williams's life and her writing, see ibid., 16–29.

87. *New Annual Register . . . for the Year 1784*, 268.

88. Radcliffe's and West's poetry was not appreciated. Reviewers recommended that West give up poetry. See Paradise, "Interpolated Poetry," esp. 68–72.

89. Critics have found these sonnets to be beautiful poetry and masterful expressions of her confinement. Cf. Daniel Robinson, "Reviving the Sonnet," 104–5.

90. For a more detailed discussion of this novel as a Wertheriad and of Williams's employment of poetry, see Backscheider, "Literary Culture as Immediate Reality."

91. Helen Maria Williams, *Julia*, 2:13.

92. One of the few critics to take women's writing about birds and animals seriously and truly productively, Margaret Doody goes somewhat astray in interpreting this poem because she does not consider its context within the novel. "Love in All its Oddness," 503–4.

93. Other critics agree. On Smith, see Stanton, "Charlotte Smith's 'Literary Business,'" 393. On Seward, see Daniel Robinson, "Reviving the Sonnet," 101–5, 110–13. This assessment is true for Williams's early career only.

94. McGann, "Mary Robinson and the Myth of Sappho," 133–34.

95. Seward, preface to *Original Sonnets*, vi.

96. Williams, *Julia*, 2:173.

97. Curran, xxiv. Curran invites the reader to weigh poems by Barbauld, Coleridge, Mary Robinson, and Southey against this poem (xxiv–xxv). See also Wolfson, "Charlotte Smith's *Emigrants*."

98. For a sketch of the climate in which Smith wrote about the clergy, see Wolfson, "Charlotte Smith's *Emigrants*," 516–21.

99. Ibid., 530. On Smith's republican "rant" and its allusions to Milton, see ibid., 529–46.

100. Loraine Fletcher dates Smith's allowing refugees to live in her home to November or December 1792. *Charlotte Smith*, 191; and see 190–201 on the couple. Book 2 of *The Emigrants* and its notes give some stories and details Smith learned from the refugees. Curran, 156–60.

101. I am grateful to Stuart Curran for this information and for the loan of his copy of *Conversations Introducing Poetry*. All citations are to the 1819 edition. Loraine Fletcher says that the child was Nicholas Smith's child "by his Persian lover" and that Charlotte thought that Nicholas "doted on Luzena's little dark face." *Charlotte Smith*, 326. Fletcher goes on to note that her complexion came from her father, whom Charlotte characterized as "quite black," rather than from her mother, 326–27. Nicholas settled in Suffolk and married an English woman; Luzena remained with her aunt Charlotte Mary into old age, 337.

102. Stuart Curran, e-mail message to author, 26 October 2000.

103. Pascoe, "Female Botanists," 193.

104. Charlotte Smith, "Conversation the First," in Smith, *Conversations Introducing Poetry*, 1:37–40.

105. Donelle R. Ruwe demonstrates that the text is also an education in rearing benevolent men who treat sisters and women with respect and care. "Benevolent Brothers and Supervising Mothers."

106. Another condemnation of the pastimes of the wealthy is in Smith's *Conversations Introducing Poetry*, 2:67–74. "Good breeding is not . . . much exerted at the card-table," Mrs. Talbot observes. 2:74.

107. For instance, when George complains about the way the final line of *The Hedge-*

hog scans, Smith takes the opportunity to discuss briefly "licences" "now very frequently taken in short and trifling pieces." *Conversations Introducing Poetry*, 1:39.

108. Smith, *Conversations Introducing Poetry*, 1:131–32. For a good treatment of this poem, see Ruwe, "Benevolent Brothers and Supervising Mothers," 105–8.

109. See Michaelson, *Speaking Volumes*, 124–27, 144–52, et passim.

110. See Clara Reeve, *An Address to the Reader, containing an account of some part of this collection, with remarks upon musical composition.*

111. For a fine study of the political nature of *The Emigrants*, see Lokke, "Mild Dominion of the Moon," 92–101. Diana Bowstead points out that "the radicalization of [Geraldine in *Desmond*] is complete by the end of the novel, and must be taken as its central action." "Charlotte Smith's *Desmond*," 261.

112. Richard Lovelace (1618–57), *To Althea, from Prison* (1649), line 25.

113. See Jane Spencer's fine discussion of this and other Smith novels in "Women Writers and the Eighteenth-Century Novel," 228–33. She quotes these lines from *Marchmont* on 231.

114. See Loraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith*, 60–61, on Smith's changing attitudes toward the Revolutionary War and Benjamin Smith's war profits. She quotes this passage from *The Old Manor House*, 61.

115. Hoagwood, Introduction, 6, 9, 8; Hoagwood is describing *Beachy Head.* See also Lokke, "Mild Dominion of the Moon," 88–90, 92–93, 95.

116. John M. Anderson, "*Beachy Head*," 574.

117. This interpretation differs from Labbe's, who sees feminine retreat in "would recline." "Charlotte Smith, *Beachy Head*," 204.

118. Labbe sees Smith engaging Wordsworth, especially his *Tintern Abbey*, in *Beachy Head* and argues that the hermit is a Wordsworth figure. Ibid., 204–10.

119. Loraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith*, 330.

120. Critics disagree on whether Smith concluded the poem before her death, but, as her biographer Loraine Fletcher says, she lived five months after submitting the volume to Joseph Johnson, the publisher. *Charlotte Smith*, 335. His "Advertisement" said that it was "not completed according to the original design," but there is no evidence that Smith did not reconceive the poem during its composition. Most tellingly, the volume had no preface, and Smith's prefaces constitute some of her most important and revealing writing. See "Advertisement" in Curran, 215. In a suggestive essay, John M. Anderson argues in "*Beachy Head*" that the poem belongs to the Romantic category "fragment," and he comes close to concluding that it is finished; his greatest contribution is the recognition of how many echoes of her own earlier poetry are contained in *Beachy Head.*

121. I am grateful to my research assistant Lynn Moody for identification of poems added to each volume.

122. White, "Autobiography and Elegy," quotation from 57.

123. I am not the first to note this range. Cf. Brooks, "Sonnets of Charlotte Smith," 14–15; Radcliffe, *Forms of Reflection*, 46–47; and Cohen, "Return to the Ode," 216–18.

124. John Keats, *Ode to a Nightingale*, line 52.

125. See her note reprinted in Curran, 121.

126. Loraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith*, 195.

127. Curran, xix. And see Curran's argument for her importance to the Romantic poetic movement on xxvi–xxviii.

128. For a suggestive discussion of the two forms together, see Cohen, "Return to the

Ode," 216–19. Cohen argues that in writing her sonnets Smith "continued some of the practices of the ode writers."

129. Raycroft, "From Charlotte Smith to Nehemiah Higginbottom," 374.

130. Jacqueline Labbe discusses this sonnet in relation to the *ut pictura poesis* tradition and to Joshua Reynolds's hierarchy of kinds of painting. "Every Poet Her Own Drawing Master," 205–8. Labbe argues that Smith transforms the feminine genres into a history painting, "domesticating" the masculine genre, 208.

131. This is Frederick Beiser's translation of a passage from Immanuel Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft;* see Beiser on the impact of this dedication to critique in making reason the standard of truth in his translation in *The Sovereignty of Reason*, 3. I realize that dating an English Enlightenment is controversial and that even that there was one is disputed.

132. Mary Chudleigh's "Of Knowledge," in *Essays upon Several Subjects*, is dedicated to Sophia of Hanover.

133. Mary Robinson, "Preface to *Sappho and Phaon* (1796)," 271.

134. Monk, "Anna Seward and the Romantic Poets"; Mellor, "Female Poet and the Poetess"; Mellor, "Criticism of Their Own," 39–48. By the mid-1990s these differences were being widely acknowledged; see, for instance, Ashfield's *Romantic Women Poets*, xiv–xv.

135. I am grateful to Robert Erickson for reminding me of this paradigm, which dates to the Middle Ages.

136. Mary Darwall, *Elegy on the Ruins of Kenilworth Castle*, in Darwall, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 2:7.

137. Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, 17–18. Kaul's book begins with Marvell and Waller and concludes with Cowper, More, and Barbauld.

138. The phrase is Marlon Ross's, and he argues that More "more than any other establishes the nineteenth-century woman writer as the conscience of culture." *Contours of Masculine Desire*, 202. He posits the existence of a "sociomoral culture" of Romantic women poets; in general, I find his generational model of women poets problematic.

139. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Sonnets on Eminent Characters*, first published in the *Morning Chronicle*, December 1794 and January 1795.

140. Favret, "Romantic Women's Poetry."

141. Guest, *Small Change*, 266.

NINE: Conclusion

Epigraph: Joanna Baillie, *Address to the Muses*, in Fullard, 56.

1. Cockburn, *Verses, occasion'd by the Busts in the Queen's Hermitage.* An earlier version of this poem was published in her 1732 monograph *The Busts set up in the Queen's Hermitage.*

2. Greer, *Slip-shod Sibyls*, xi.

3. Walter Scott quotes some of the poetry she wrote about the situation: "O! be it mine to cheer and warm / Thy drooping heart, thy helpless form!" in Scott, "Biographical Preface," 1:xviii.

4. McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry*, 68–70. Margaret Ezell interprets posthumous publication differently in "Posthumous Publication of Women's Manuscripts," 125–28.

5. Lonsdale describes Chandler as an "industrious and courageous woman." Lonsdale, 151–52.

6. Maria Madan Cowper, *On Viewing her Sleeping Infant*, in Lonsdale, 270–71. A child of a poet who married into a poetic family, Maria Cowper wrote in a variety of forms and

showed the influence first of the "graveyard" school of poets, especially Edward Young, and then of the Evangelical poets.

7. Doody, "Swift among the Women"; Landry, *Muses of Resistance;* Mell, *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers;* Karina Williamson, "Tenth Muse." See also Tucker, "Swift's 'Female Senate.' "

8. Elizabeth Hands, *The Rural Maid in London*, in Hands, *Death of Amnon* (1996), 88.

9. Lonsdale, 96, 165, 311, 323. Elizabeth Tollet, who for a time lived in the Tower of London while her father was commissioner of the navy, could still write, "Thrice happy you, in Learning's other seat! / No noisy guards disturb your blest retreat." *To my Brother at St. John's College in Cambridge*, in Lonsdale, 96–97. See also Tollet's *On the Death of Sir Isaac Newton*, in Tollet, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1724), 128–30.

10. Quoted in Grundy, " 'Entire Works of Clarinda,' " 92.

11. See Paul Hammond, "Classical Texts," 143–59.

12. Rebecca Gibson also notes women's consciousness of the unevennesses in their education. " 'My Want of Skill,' " 83.

13. Mary Masters, preface to her *Poems on Several Occasions* (1733).

14. Clara Reeve, *To my Friend Mrs. ——*, in Lonsdale, 248–49.

15. Since the publication of Margaret Ezell's *Patriarch's Wife*, other studies have replicated and refined her findings on women's willingness to have a wide readership. See Turner, *Living by the Pen.*

16. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, 57.

17. Quoted in Gibson, " 'My Want of Skill,' " 81.

18. *Adventurer* 114 (11 December 1753), in Johnson, *Yale Edition of the Works*, 2:458.

19. *Connoisseur* 2 (22 May 1755): 409.

20. Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the Literary Past*, 273–74.

21. On Richardson and Johnson, see Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain*, 26, 30n52, 229.

22. Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, 99.

23. Defoe, *Augusta Triumphans*, 4.

24. Mary Barber, *To the Right Honourable the Lady Dowager Torrington*, in Barber, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 34. Gibson provides a survey of women's reasons for publishing in " 'My Want of Skill.' "

25. Mary Savage, *Letter to Miss E.B.*, 1:ii. Other reasons she quotes are "the pressing requests of my Friends — or at the desire of several Persons of Quality."

26. Clara Reeve, *To the Reader*, in Reeve, *Original Poems on Several Occasions*, xi.

27. Reeve, *To My Friend Mrs. ——*, 10–11.

28. Darwall, dedication to *Original Poems on Several Occasions*, 8.

29. Langhorne, review of *Original Poems on Several Occasions. By Miss Whateley*, 445. On this and other reviews, see Messenger, " 'Daughter of Shenstone'?" 472.

30. Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past*, 285.

31. Bernikow, *World Split Open*, 8.

32. Jonathan Swift, prefatory letter to Barber, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1734), vii.

33. More, *Strictures*, 2:15.

34. Bernikow, *World Split Open*, 8.

35. Toni Bowers's own statement is in Bowers, "Sex, Lies, and Invisibility," 71.

36. Hinnant, 20, 24; Grundy, "Preface to the Paperback Reprint," vii.

37. Cavendish, "To the Two Most Famous Universities of England." I am grateful to

Anna Battigelli for information about Cavendish and about the amazing letters people wrote her in response to receiving the books.

38. On the almost miraculous collecting of Blamire's poetry, see Feldman, "How Their Audiences Knew Them," 36; Smith is quoted in Curran, 3. This situation was not unique to women; Henry Fielding also had to try to collect his poems from scattered correspondents. Fielding and Fielding, *Correspondence of Henry and Sarah Fielding*, 23.

39. Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, 68. Brown wrote, "Poetry, the creative act, . . . the archetypal sexual act. . . . The lady is the poem; . . . Laura is really poetry." Quoted on 13.

40. Greer, "Biodegradable Art," 8.

41. This is, of course, a familiar observation, and a vast literature documenting the impact on women is now available. Hinnant says, for instance, that which poems of Finch's were anthologized depended on the historical interests of the time, not on any prevailing aesthetic standard or on any attempt to present representative poems by her." Hinnant, 16–17. See also Bernikow, *World Split Open*, 3–47; Suarez, "Production and Consumption of the Eighteenth-Century Poetic Miscellany"; Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, chaps. 2–4; and Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader.*

42. This section is based on Ashfield, *Romantic Women Poets*, xi–xviii.

43. Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past*, 261 et passim.

44. Eger, "Fashioning a Female Canon," 207.

45. Roger Lonsdale, introduction to Lonsdale, *New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse*, xxxvi.

46. Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past*, 259, 277; for his survey of these "national collections," see 252–53.

47. This "progress" poem praises thirty-four British male poets and twenty-nine classical poets and Renaissance Italians.

48. Eger, "Fashioning a Female Canon," 202.

49. Poems by Lady Mary were added to the fourth and sixth volumes. After the second edition he always included topical poems by talked-about people or subjects. An example is *Epistle to Voltaire*, by the king of Prussia, in Dodsley, *Collection of Poems in Six Volumes* (1758), 6:281. On the poetry of Lady Mary in Dodsley's *Collections*, see Grundy, "Politics of Female Authorship"; Grundy speculates about the movement of Lady Mary's poems on 22.

50. Sherburn and Bond, *Restoration and the Eighteenth Century*, 1012.

51. Butt, *Mid-Eighteenth Century*, 57. Butt bases his chapter "Poetry, 1740–1760" on Dodsley's. See also Michael F. Suarez's important essay on Dodsley's importance, editorial practices, and reasons for his commercial success, "Trafficking in the Muse." The best treatment of the contents, shape, and social impact of Dodsley's *Collections* is Solomon, *Rise of Robert Dodsley*, see 107–17, 123, 136, 147–48, et passim.

52. Justice, *Manufacturers of Literature*, 133. His chapter 3 concentrates on the commodification of Pope. Suarez notes the "virtual absence" of Pope's poems (and Young's, Prior's, Gay's, Swift's, and Smart's) from the *Collection.* "Trafficking in the Muse," 298.

53. See Justice's lively account of this appeal in *Manufacturers of Literature*, 124–27.

54. Cf. Havens, "Changing Taste in the Eighteenth Century"; and Eger, "Fashioning a Female Canon," 202, 206–7. An exception to the exclusion of women in this period is Southey, *Specimens of the Later English Poets.* The literature on poetry and nationhood is also vast. A few studies are Fairer, "Creating a National Poetry"; Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past;* and Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire.*

55. Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, 26. The sudden and ubiquitous, enthusiastic singing of "Rule, Britannia" at public events, especially at plays, is well known. As Kaul reminds us in his stimulating reading of Thomson's ode (1–9), it was written to be sung immediately after the hermit-bard "exhorts" King Alfred to action in *Alfred: A Masque*, by Thomson and David Mallet.

56. Newman, *Rise of English Nationalism*, 112.

57. Solomon, *Rise of Robert Dodsley*, 113. See also William Blake's white-haired bard with arresting eyes illustrating Gray's *The Bard.*

58. Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the English Literary Past*, 7. Terry notes that the five-volume set was published under Theophilus Cibber's name.

59. Greer, "Biodegradable Art," 8.

60. On these anthologies and revisions, see Eger, "Fashioning a Female Canon," 210–12; and Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, 112–17, on *Poems by Eminent Ladies* specifically; quotation from Ezell, 112. The introduction to Robert Anderson's thirteen-volume *Works of the British Poets* provides a substantial list of earlier anthologies, as does Barbara Benedict's appendix to *Making the Modern Reader*, 223–28.

61. Oddly, Darwall's poem titled *An Ode* is included in volume 1 of *Poems on Several Occasions* under "Mrs. Darwall."

62. Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, 68; Greer, "Biodegradable Art," 7.

63. This is not to say that men's poetry has not been excerpted and "improved" by editors. For some examples of Dodsley's tampering, see Wendorf, "Robert Dodsley as Editor."

64. Wordsworth, *Poems and Extracts*, 3–6. Margaret Doody traces his excisions through editions published as late as 1928. "Love in All Its Oddness," 499.

65. See Salvaggio, *Enlightened Absence*, 114–16.

66. Doody, "Love in All Its Oddness," 499.

67. Mary Jones, *An Epistle to Lady Bowyer*, 1–7, quotation from 7.

68. I have used the seventh edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (New York: Norton, 2000).

69. Ezell, "Re-visioning the Restoration," 138. She also notes the narrowing attending the search for "uniformity in subject and style." Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, 117, 123–24 et passim.

70. Sherman, *Restoration and the Eighteenth Century.*

71. Quoted in Ezell, *Social Authorship*, 21.

72. Greer, *Slip-shod Sibyls*, 172.

73. Cf. Barker, "Poetry from the Provinces," 245, 253. C. Lennart Carlson actually revealed Cave's heavy-handed, officious revising of the poetry he published in *First Magazine*, 199, 230.

74. Oxford University Press's Women Writers in English series. The facsimile series "The Romantics: Women Poets," published by Routledge/Thoemmes, has made a few eighteenth-century poets available, notably Williams and Robinson.

75. Todd, *Secret Life of Aphra Behn;* McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry;* Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu;* Loraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith;* Slagle, *Joanna Baillie; Collected Letters of Joanna Baillie*, ed. Slagle; King, *Jane Barker, Exile;* Charlotte Smith, *Collected Letters*, ed. Stanton.

76. A few critics, including Marlon Ross and Linda Zionkowski, have argued that the construction of a poetic vocation and the elevation of that career and the abilities and

dedication necessary for it during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries discouraged women's inclusion. Ross, *Contours of Masculine Desire;* Zionkowski, *Men's Work.*

77. Ross, *Contours of Masculine Desire*, 165.

78. Lipking, *Life of the Poet*, x.

79. Mary Scott, *Female Advocate*, viii.

80. Elizabeth Carter, *On the Death of Mrs. Rowe*, in Carter, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1766), 10.

81. Quoted in Guest, *Small Change*, 127.

82. Lipking, *Life of the Poet*, xi, xiii.

83. See, for example, Barbauld's *Verses on Mrs. Rowe*, in Barbauld, *Poems*, 101–3. There is a great deal of literature on what the eighteenth century knew of Sappho. See Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, on Sappho and Leapor, 83–91; Andreadis, *Sappho in Early Modern England*, *27–39;* and DeJean, *Fictions of Sappho.* Robinson almost undoubtedly knew sources infrequently cited today, such as Pierre Bayle's popular *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, which was first translated into English as *An historical and critical dictionary* in 1710; Madame de Scudéry's *Artamenes* and *Les femmes illustres;* and Anne LeFèvre Dacier's *Les poésies d'Anacréon et de Sapho.* Joseph Addison's essays on Sappho, numbers 223, 229, and 233, date to 1711; they are in Bond, *Spectator*, 2:365–69, 390–93. Bond says that Addison's source was primarily Bayle (2:365n3).

84. Mary Leapor, *Hymn to Morning*, in Leapor, *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748), 25.

85. Ezell, "Re-visioning the Restoration," 137.

86. Roethke, "Poetry of Louise Bogan," 133–34. Roethke is not contrasting Bogan's poetry to these qualities. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss this passage in some detail in their introduction to *Shakespeare's Sisters*, xvii–xviii; their collection led me to Roethke's essay.

87. Dyce, *Specimens of the British Poetesses*, iv.

88. Todd, *Sign of Angellica*, 136; for other descriptions of poetry in the same terms, see 135–36, 222–23, and 168–71.

89. Isobel Armstrong titles an important essay "The Gush of the Feminine: How Can We Read Women's Poetry of the Romantic Period?"; Germaine Greer especially resents the sentimental and moral, even lugubrious and pious. *Slip-shod Sibyls*, 257.

90. The phrases are Germaine Greer's about twentieth-century women poets and the price of escaping the label "minor." *Slip-shod Sibyls*, 424.

91. Terry, *Poetry and the Making of the Literary Past*, 285.

92. Armstrong, "Gush of the Feminine," 15.

93. Redmond, " 'If the salt have lost his savour,' " 64.

94. Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire*, 18; see also Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry.*

95. Fulford, " 'Nature' Poetry," 109. Fulford, like Kaul, draws heavily on the poetry of Pope, Young, Thomson, Gray, and Cowper and notes that "the georgic sustains a vision of empire," 115.

96. A disturbing pattern can be apprehended too often, however, as recent work on Lennox illustrates. Modern critics are amazingly (and disconcertingly) like eighteenth-century publishers where women writers are concerned: they pick them up, praise and publicize them, and then drop them.

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